

# beer moos



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

Milton Keynes & North Bucks CAMRA Branch Magazine



**BREWHOUSE & KITCHEN  
BRINGS UPSIDE DOWN  
BREWERY TO CENTRAL  
MILTON KEYNES**

**OLNEY OPENINGS  
PUB TALK  
BREWS NEWS  
BRANCH AWARDS  
BELGIAN BEER BREAK**



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## EDITORIAL

It was very encouraging to see the Chequers in Fenny packed for the branch AGM back in January, but it was still difficult to fill the key committee positions. There have been a couple of resignations since then and the branch finds itself dangerously close to being unable to function once more. You will notice that there are only a few branch social events taking place this year and the 25th Concrete Pint Beer & Cider Festival will not be held in 2018. Hopefully some of you reading this will feel it is worth supporting these activities and will be able to spare a few hours per month to help us out. As they say, many hands make light work.

It is certainly an interesting time to get involved with CAMRA. At the National AGM, members voted to approve all but one of a series of recommendations designed to ensure CAMRA is in a fit state for the future. Little has actually changed as CAMRA will retain its focus on pub protection and real ale, with support for real cider and perry now formally added to its remit. However, it was the single

recommendation that didn't get the 75% approval required by law that was most contentious, as it called on CAMRA to be the voice of all pub goers. When you consider CAMRA's pub protection remit you will see it is already active on behalf of all pub goers, so you have to wonder what all the fuss was about. As you read through this issue you'll see that the MK and North Bucks branch is keen to support a variety of pubs, clubs and breweries, not just those with a forest of handpumps on the bar.

Pubs and clubs are still struggling nationally with 18 closing every week. Locally we're bucking that trend, with pubs opening and lots of refurbishments. We shouldn't be complacent though as it is still tough time to be running a pub, club or brewery. Please continue to support your locals so that the good news keeps on coming.

Finally, many thanks to Steve Brady for his work as Beer Moos editor over the last few years. It'll be a challenge to maintain the high standards he has kept.

## DIARY

MON <b>02</b> JUL	Branch meeting <b>Woolpack</b> Buckingham
WED <b>01</b> AUG	Branch meeting <b>Cannon</b> Newport Pagnell
MON <b>03</b> SEP	Branch meeting <b>Chequers</b> Fenny Stratford
SAT <b>08</b> SEP	Regional meeting <b>Old Manor</b> Bracknell
WED <b>03</b> OCT	Branch meeting <b>Cannon</b> Newport Pagnell
WED <b>07</b> NOV	Branch meeting <b>Cannon</b> Newport Pagnell
MON <b>03</b> DEC	Branch meeting <b>Chequers</b> Fenny Stratford

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We need your support to help run the branch. If you're a branch member and can help fill any of the vacant positions, please contact John McLaughlin via [contact@mkcamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@mkcamra.org.uk)

### Trading Standards

If you have a complaint about any unfair trading practice, such as short measures or misleading product promotion, contact: Milton Keynes Trading Standards, PO Box 105, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3HH. Tel: 01908 252433. Email: [tsd@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:tsd@milton-keynes.gov.uk)  
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### To Advertise

To place an advert or enquire about our rate card please contact: Neil Richards on 01536 358670

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## UPSIDE DOWN BREWERY ARRIVES IN CENTRAL MK

If you've not been to the Theatre District in Central Milton Keynes for a while, you may be in for a few surprises. For a start, the whole area has now been rebranded as 12th Street and at night the buildings are bathed in lights of constantly shifting hues.

After the David Garrick closed its doors a couple of years ago, the **Slug & Lettuce** had been the only beacon of hope in a fairly dry area of town for ale fans. However, things have just become a whole lot better with the opening of a **Brewhouse & Kitchen** branch at the former JD Wetherspoon site.



Refurbishment work cost over £1 million and, in common with other B&K sites across the UK, a microbrewery has been included to brew the pub's core beers. And what a brewery it is! Gleaming copper vessels sit at the heart of the pub, with a spiral staircase linking the hot liquor tank, mash tun and copper at ground level with an elevated platform containing the four fermentation vessels. This unconventional set-up was the inspiration behind the brewery's name: the Upside Down Brewery.

The pub opened to the public on St. George's Day, but a hitch with drainage meant the brewery wasn't operational until May 19th. Initially the pub's beers were brewed at other B&K brewpubs, so expect the beers to evolve as head brewer Liam Ager gets to grips with his new kit. He arrives in MK having gained experience at Devon's highly respected Otter Brewery.

Liam will brew four permanent cask ales for the pub, all with MK themed names: *12th Street* (3.6% ABV), an English style session



bitter; *Leaping Man* (4.2% ABV), a golden ale named in honour of local long jump hero Greg Rutherford; *Webber's Vision* (4.6% ABV), a robust, US hopped best bitter named after Melvin Webber (his theories inspired MK's planners); *Colossus* (5% ABV), an impressive IPA with traditional roots, named in honour of the code-breaking computers developed at Bletchley Park.



There are also keg beers, some of which will be kept in serving tanks located behind the brewing kit. The core range will include *Boston Pale* (4.8% ABV), an American style pale ale and *Decoder* (5.4% ABV), a rich oatmeal stout. There's also *Legend* (5.0% ABV), a lager brewed by Shepherd Neame for all B&K pubs due to the volumes required. Seasonal brews will add variety to the line-up with *Sunspot*, a Belgian style saison, set to be the summer offer. You may also see occasional special brews under the Brewer's Choice banner.

In addition to the house brews, there's a good selection of British, European and American beers available on tap, in bottles and in cans.

Beer is a big feature in just about everything the pub does. Food is paired with beer across the extensive lunch and evening menus and is often used during cooking.

There are special beer themed packages, including beer and food matching sessions and a beer tasting masterclass to introduce you to a range of beer styles. Serious beer geeks can also book a full day brewery experience, a supervised session brewing one of the core beers with Liam. Breakfast, lunch, beer tasting and five litres of your brew to take home are all included in the package. And if you think you know a bit about beer, drop in on Thursday evenings to take the blindfold taste challenge!



## UPSIDE-DOWN BREWERY ARRIVES IN CENTRAL MK

The pub itself is spread across several floors, each with its own bar offering the full range of beers. The decor is excellent throughout, following the beer and brewing theme with a slight steam punk twist. The main bar is on the ground floor, a few steps above the brewery area. The space is mainly taken with tables, but a little snug is tucked away in one corner.

On the first floor you'll find the Middleton Bar, which can be booked for private functions. There's a balcony looking out across the brewery, as shown on our front cover.



Those prepared to tackle the stairs to the third floor of the building will find the impressive Campbell Room. This is a multi-purpose space for all kinds of private functions, with capacity for up to 200 people. It's a bright and light room capped by an impressive wooden dome. There's also an outside terrace with a view over the 12th Street area, providing a unique glimpse of the Milton Keynes skyline.



Perhaps most importantly, the beer and service has been great, making B&K a very welcome addition to the Central Milton Keynes beer scene. Make sure you check it out.

## 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**.



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## OLNEY OPENINGS

Olney has been a hive of activity so far in 2018. The **Bull Hotel** reopened in February after being out of action for almost two years following fire damage to the grade II listed building. The pub's interior has been entirely transformed to make maximum use of the space available, including covering the courtyard as part of a large restaurant area. The bar is now on the left side of the pub and continues to serve beers from the Wells and Young's range. The exterior of the pub has also been revamped with an improved suntrap garden to the rear and outside seating at the front. The accommodation has been upgraded too, completing this local landmark's welcome return to its former glory.



A few doors down the road the **Cherry Tree** opened its doors for the first time at Easter. Situated on the corner of Spring Lane and the High Street, the grade II listed building has been carefully refurbished to preserve its original Victorian and Georgian features. The main bar is to the left of the entrance lobby with a small but comfortable seating area to the right. There's additional luxurious seating upstairs, while the rear of the building is devoted to a large restaurant area. You'll

always find a Fuller's beer or two available here, but they also plan to include local beers once their cellar has settled down. Bottled beers from Blackpit Brewery were already available when we visited.



If you're looking for a change of scene and tipple, **No. 26** is another new opening on the other side of Olney's Market Place. A stylish café bar it boasts an extensive wine list and a good selection of gins, but beer lovers will have to make do with bottled *Camden Pale Ale*.

Elsewhere in Olney, the **Swan Inn & Bistro** has dropped its *Local Pale Ale* in favour of a Greene King brewed house beer badged as *Up the Swanny*. In addition to two other Greene King beers you'll also find ales from regional breweries and occasional local brews. The **Carlton House Club** continues to offer up to four real ales, with St. Austell *Cornish Best* proving to be a regular choice. A couple of locally brewed beers from Gun Dog Ales were available on our last visit. Nearby, the **Two Brewers** also offers up to four beers, usually from regional brewers. They plan to hold a beer festival from 6th-8th July, should you need another reason to visit Olney for a pint or three. (Their sister pub, the **Bell** in Marston Moretaine, will also run a beer festival from 15th-17th June.)

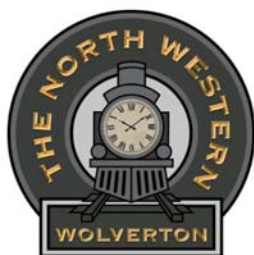
Bus route 21 connects Central MK with Olney via Newport Pagnell, Sherington and Emberton, continuing on to Lavendon. A regular service operates Mon to Sat, with the last service heading back towards MK at 19:47 from opposite the Bull. Route 37 connects Astwood and Newport Pagnell with Stoke Goldington, Weston Underwood and Olney until early evening, Mon to Sat.



Good news from Sherington where repairs on the **White Hart's** fire damaged kitchen area are under way after some delays and should be complete by the summer. Their early May bank holiday beer & cider festival seemed to be going very well when our reporter visited.

The **Old Swan** in Bletchley suffered a fire in its kitchen on Sunday May 6th. Thankfully there were no injuries reported and the pub should be open as normal by the time you read this.

Wolverton's **Craufurd Arms** has long been established as a first class live music venue, but the pub itself has been upping its beer game recently. Alongside a packed programme of events, a couple of handpulls have featured some interesting beers in good nick. Bottled beer from Blackened Sun is also available and we hear real cider will be added soon.



Also in Wolverton the **North Western** was given a fresh new look this spring, both inside and out. The pub managed to stay open throughout the work and continues to serve ales from the Wells and Young's portfolios, attracting

some impressive beer scores. Their regular live music events continue alongside all the televised sport you could wish for.

It has been reported that Wolverton's **Top Club** was forced to close its doors at the start of the year. Falling membership and increasing costs seem to have been the problem. The future of the building is not known at present.

The **MK Biergarten** has gone mobile following a successful crowdfunding campaign. Look out for their new bar-in-a-van at local events from summer onwards. Back at their Wolverton base, the pub has extended its opening hours, introduced a small range of local artisan spirits and now offers a discount on takeaway beers in midweek. There have been similar changes at the **Beer Bear**, their sister pub in Stony Stratford, too.

The big news from Central Milton Keynes is the arrival of a **Brewhouse & Kitchen** in the newly revamped 12th Street area of town, which we cover in detail elsewhere in this

issue. We were also going to report on exciting times for our **Draft House** outlet too, as the pub chain was acquired by Scottish beer punks BrewDog. However, having announced plans to retain the Draft House brand and keep cask ale in those pubs, the Milton Keynes branch was quickly closed down! As we go to print hoardings have been erected at the site to announce the imminent arrival of a BrewDog branded bar. Watch that space.



If the demise of **Draft House** leaves a beer and burger shaped hole in your life, look out for **Craft & Cleaver**, who are due to arrive at the Hub in June. They aim to bring American inspired barbecue food and craft beer to CMK. They have been vocal about their "big, brash, messy and tasty" menu, but quiet about the beer. A look at their St. Albans outlet suggests you'll find lots of IPAs and lagers, some familiar and some not. Another one to watch.



If bold BBQ food is your thing, Buckingham's **Binn** now offers you the chance to enjoy their smokey offerings in their secret garden. The beer range remains focused on Fuller's, including their new keg *Session IPA* as well as their traditional cask ales.

Greene King has refurbished the **Lakeside** pub at Willen Lake under its Eating Inn brand. Work on the new look was completed in time for the last May bank holiday, just as the lake's events

## PUB TALK

season gets going. The **Broughton** has also been revamped, but remains part of the Hungry Horse brand. No prizes for guessing the beer range reported from both pubs so far!

More refurbishment news reaches us from Winslow, where the **Swan** was closed for a few weeks in January for a general revamp. There are plans to do further work to the pub's garden when warmer weather arrives.

Congratulations to Phil Caley on clocking up 12 years in charge at the **Stratton Arms** in Turweston, on March 31st. Although not challenging for the longest serving landlord in the branch, it's still welcome news from an excellent traditional village pub offering up to five cask ales. Well worth visiting.

Both the **Peartree Bridge Inn** and **Wolverton House** are now being operated by Stonehouse Pizza & Carvery. No prizes for guessing what features heavily on their menus! So far, beer reports have been restricted to Sharp's Doom Bar, although there is scope for more choice.

Finally, the **Cross Keys** in Woolstone reopened at Easter after major refurbishment works. The restaurant was moved to the right hand side of the pub and extended outwards to incorporate the adjacent barn. Thankfully the work has been done tastefully to avoid damaging the exterior appearance of this charming old thatched pub. The internal work is of a similarly high standard and the pub has retained six handpulls. The core beers remain Wells and Young's oriented but they also have interesting guests and are experimenting with locally produced beers too.



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Amphill Brewhouse is undergoing a change of name. New owners Chris Kelly and Marisa Kirchner needed a new company name for legal reasons and decided to combine their surnames to get **Kelchner Brewery**. There will be new branding and new beers, the first of which is *Local is Lekker*, a 3.9% ABV bitter and a black IPA is also in the works. Several of the existing beers will be retained and rebranded to emphasise the connection with Amphill.



**Blackened Sun** have been busy producing seasonal brews. For spring they introduced *Coven* (3.5% ABV) and *Supercoven* (7% ABV), American hopped saisons that share the same recipe with the former using half the quantities of malt and hops as the latter. A summer brew, *Solar*, is on the way. The second beer in the *Mixed Fermentation Project* series should also be available over the summer. It has been fermented for over two months with six strains of *Brettanomyces*, a saison yeast and some wood chips. Beers are available direct from the brewery in Stacey Bushes most Saturdays from 11:00 to 15:00 and can often be found at local vegan street food events. There are plans for a crowd funded tap room at the brewery which could be open by autumn.



It was party time in the **Blackpit** tap room near Stowe at end of April as they celebrated the brewery's first birthday. Two new beers were available, *Indian Ink*, a 6% ABV black IPA featuring Simcoe hops and *Woodlands*, a 3.6% ABV session bitter. The brewery is surrounded by a lot of birch trees, so they are planning to use some birch sap in a future brew. There will

be a Festival of Beer and Brewing held at the brewery on Saturday 18th August, for which tickets are available now.

**Bucks Star** are fully operational again at their Stonebridge base. In addition to their four regular beers (*No.1*, *Magiovinium*, *Mideltone* and *Waltone*), they are piloting small batch limited edition beers under the Mashed in MK name. Their Growler Swap initiative has been out and about at markets in the MK area and London. Other producers have been added, with beer from **Concrete Cow** and cider from **Wharf Distillery** now available. To find out more, visit [growlerswap.beer](http://growlerswap.beer) online. A home delivery scheme also operates across many MK postcodes.

Roger Protz paid a visit to **Concrete Cow** in February to check out the Milton Keynes beer scene. The result was a great Protz on Beer blog article, which also features **Hornes** and Stony's Beer Bear. Visit [protzonbeer.co.uk](http://protzonbeer.co.uk) and search for Beer Dons.

Northampton's **Frog Island** have new owners and smart new branding for their beers. They've added an American pale ale to their range called *Pond Hop* (5% ABV).



It's a similar story at **Great Oakley** in Tiffield which also has a new owner and neat new branding. Their popular golden ale *Egret* (3.5% ABV) has been added to their bottled range, which will all become vegan friendly soon.



If you visit **Hornes** in Bow Brickhill you'll find it is a little bigger after some expansion work in the first half of the year. A special beer was brewed to celebrate the Beer Bear micropub's first birthday. *Arapawa* (4.5% ABV) is a single hopped pale ale made with Rākau hops. The name is a nod to a rare breed of goat found on the island of the same name in New Zealand. The entire core beer range of *Dark Fox*, *Featherstone*, *Ryestone* and the Triple Goats (*Pale*, *Porter* and *IPA*), are all now certified as gluten free. The golden ale *Summer Swallows* (4.5% ABV) has returned with the warmer



## BREWS NEWS

weather and it should be gluten free too. Look out for *Hat Trick Hero* (3.6% ABV), a malty amber session ale featuring Ekuanot and Cascade hops, which will get a limited run during the football World Cup.

**Potbelly** of Kettering have a couple of new beers available. *Royal Ale* (4% ABV) is a golden ale to celebrate the royal wedding and *Penalty Snout Out* (4% ABV) will be around during the football World Cup in Russia.

**Three Hills** have some interesting new brews to tempt you this summer. *Thai Pale Ale* features lemongrass, ginger and makrut lime, *South Pacific Hefeweizen* is a fruity wheat beer and *Pepperberry Saison* includes strawberries and pink peppercorns. All are 5.5% ABV. Head to your favourite bottle shop to find them.

*Amarillo* (4.2% ABV), an American style IPA, is the latest offering from **Towcester Mill**. There are extended hours at their excellent tap room for the summer. Check online for details.

**Tring** always bring an interesting selection of

beer styles to their monthly specials. This year's beers are all linked to Bletchley Park. Look out for *Enigma*, *Colossus*, *Wrens* and *Heath Robinson* over the summer months.

**Vale** have recently opened a new tap room at their brewery in Brill. In addition to stocking the full range of Vale beers, the tap room's shop also includes an extensive selection of Scotch whisky and gin, as well as bottled craft beers.

The **Wriggly Monkey** Brewery will become the latest addition to the branch's LocAle scheme. It is currently setting up at Bicester Heritage on the RAF Bicester site. As with the other businesses at Bicester Heritage, there's a strong classic car theme.

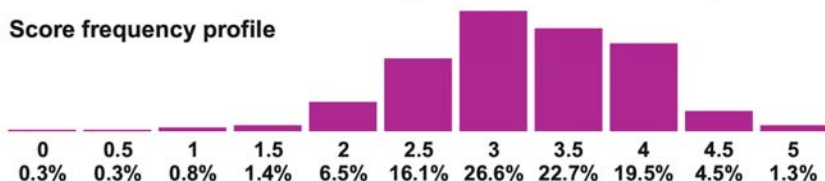
There's loads happening at **XT** brewery. Their popular *HopCat* (3.9% ABV) will be getting renamed to *HopKitty* following a legal wrangle with an American bar company. A couple of limited edition stronger variants will be released too, *Bad Kitty* (5.9% ABV) and *Evil Kitty*. Under their **Animal** brand, look out for *Giraffe* and *Wolf*, both 4.6% ABV.

## MK & NORTH BUCKS CASK ALE QUALITY REPORT

We use the beer scores you send us to help select the pubs we put forward for the **Good Beer Guide**, so we're very grateful for the time and effort you take to do this. Here's a look at the data for the 12 months to 31st May 2018.

Remember it is quality of cask ale we want you to score: zero for no real ale available; 1 for poor; 2 for average; 3 for good; 4 for very good; 5 for perfect (very rare). Submit your scores via [whatpub.com](http://whatpub.com) and we'll do the rest.

### Score frequency profile



**3.20**  
average beer  
score



**1164**  
beer scores  
submitted



**116**  
pubs & clubs  
visited



**81**  
members  
contributed



**273**  
different days  
covered



**175**  
breweries  
recorded



**£3.27**  
average per  
pint

## BRANCH SOCIALS & LOCAL EVENTS

As the branch currently lacks a Social Secretary, we only have a few social events planned at present, but do check our website and social media for updates. Please get in touch if you'd like to help us organise more events in the future. Those branch socials we do know about are marked with **SOCIAL**.

Fri 22 to Sat 23 Jun: Leighton Buzzard 1st Beerfest, Scout Hut, 48 Grovebury Road, LU7 4SW.

Sat 23 Jun: The Mousehole Festival, Carrington Arms, Moulsoe.

Fri 29 Jun to Sun 01 Jul: Beer Festival, Potbelly Brewery, Sydney Street, Kettering, NN16 0JA.

Fri 06 to Sun 08 Jul: Beer & Cider Festival, Two Brewers, Olney.

Fri 06 to Sun 08 Jul: Beer & Prosecco Festival, Stony Stratford Cricket Club, Ostlers Lane.

Sat 07 Jul: Woburn Sands Music Festival, Recreation Ground, Woburn Sands. (Hornes bar.)

Fri 13 to Sat 14 Jul: Buckingham Beer & Music Festival, Buckingham RFC, Maids Moreton, MK18 1RF.

**SOCIAL** Sat 21 Jul: Winsolw & Buckingham crawl, starting George, Winslow, 12:45. X60 bus from CMK & Buckingham. Arriva Orbit day ticket £6.30.

Thu 26 to Sat 28 Jul: CAMRA Maidenhead Beer & Cider

Our listing also includes local and regional events known to us at the time of publication. To the best of our knowledge the information provided is correct, but do check with the event organisers before travelling. Events organised by CAMRA are shown in **bold** type.

**Festival, Desborough College, Maidenhead, SL6 2QB.**

**Tue 07 to Sat 11 Aug: CAMRA Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London, W14 8UX.**

**SOCIAL** Fri 10 Aug: GBBF branch visit, Olympia, London. Train from Wolverton, MK Central or Bletchley.

Sat 18 Aug: Festival of Beer and Brewing, Blackpit Brewery, Stowe.

Sat 18 Aug: Summer Fiesta of Gin, Cider, Beer & Food, York House, Stony Stratford.

Fri 24 to Sun 26 Aug: Cider & Sausage Festival, MK11, Kiln Farm.

Thu 06 to Sun 09 Sep: Beer Festival, MK Museum, Wolverton.

Sat 08 Sep: Beer & Music Festival, Lamb, Stoke Goldington.

**Wed 03 to Sat 06 Oct: Bedford Beer & Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, Bedford.**

Fri 05 to Sun 07 Oct: Oktoberfest, MK11, Kiln Farm.



## WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DRINKING & WHERE

More from our beer score data, the most frequently scored breweries (left) and pubs/clubs (right).





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# MK & NORTH BUCKS CAMRA BRANCH AWARDS

## Pub of the Year Chequers, Fenny Stratford



Vale Brewery have been involved with the **Chequers** for a number of years, but their investment in 2017 transformed the pub from ordinary to extraordinary. An interesting range of cask, keg and bottled beers, plus the addition of a kitchen, has proven popular with locals and more distant visitors alike. Tim Gilkes (right) and the team are congratulated for making a big impact in such a short time.

## Cider Pub of the Year Red Lion, Fenny Stratford



Long known for the quality of his beers, Guy Plumb (right) is now making a habit of taking our cider award, this being the third in a row. You may be able to find more obscure ciders elsewhere, but consistency in quality matters, which is where the **Red Lion** delivers. A perry can often be found amongst the ciders on offer, which is very welcome in our branch area.

## Club of the Year Royal British Legion, Newport Pagnell



A touch of politics here as we know this club is under threat, but Jim Campbell (left) runs a tight ship when it comes to looking after the club's beers, having served with the Navy. Up to three cask ales feature and quality has been consistently high for several years. If you are looking for a traditional club which supports service men and women, veterans and their families, look no further than **Newport's RBL**.

## Chairman's Awards Grate, Central Milton Keynes



These awards are intended to encourage new comers and those who may not qualify for our other awards. **Grate** is recognised for bringing a pub back to MK's main shopping centre, where bar manager Nicky Welling (right) can guide you through the exciting craft beer options available. Similar awards will also be made to Beer Bear and Blackpit Brewery Tap.



## LONG SERVICE AWARD: CLIVE GRIFFIN

Clive Griffin is the current licensee of the **Fountain** in Steeple Claydon. His family have been in the licensed trade since 1885. His great grandfather had the Seven Stars in Twyford which his grandfather, George, then took over. His father, Cyril, was then born there. Cyril later married Ruby Carter from Steeple Claydon. He went on to run the pub for seven years and Clive was born there.

The family then moved to Steeple Claydon and into the Fountain in 1955, when Clive was just 14 months old. His father continued to run the pub until his death in 1980. Clive then took over the pub with his mother until she passed away in 2009. In the meantime, Cyril had married his wife Dawn and they are still there 20 years later.

The trade has remained constant all this time. The pub has a dominoes team, a ladies darts team and an aunt sally team. The Fountain is a traditional drinkers' pub and it has never

served food. Some weekend evenings there will be a singer or group entertaining the customers and there are various fund raising events such as pig roasts. In the autumn they hold a pumpkin competition, something that started as a bet between two regulars and has become an annual event.

Dave Hayes



Clive (left) and Dawn are pictured with Dave Hayes at the February 12th presentation.

## LONG SERVICE AWARD: ANDY SPURR

On April 19th local branch members headed out to the picturesque village of Thornborough to present a long service award to Andy Spurr, who has been pulling pints for over 35 years at the **Two Brewers**.

Andy is a supporter of CAMRA but his first priorities are to the community who sustain his pub. Our visit coincided with a local darts final, Buckingham's Three Cups playing Winslow's Swan, their respective supporters making it a lively evening. Andy describes the pub as a "proper boozer" with the emphasis on beer as there is no food offer.

Andy recalls arriving at the pub with his first wife on October 6th 1982, after being stewards at Deanshanger Conservative Club. "First night was heaving with locals coming to suss out the new landlord and landlady. We realised early on that the pub relied on local support so did everything to accommodate all the clubs, like darts, dominoes and pool." After nine years as a tenant, Andy acquired the pub from ABC and it became the free house it is today.

Andy has lots of great memories from the pub, including his wedding to Val in October 2002. "Over 200 guests in a marquee in the pub

garden, a great evening had by all finishing at 3am, or so I'm told. For my 60th birthday, Val invited our friends and customers to celebrate at 1956 prices, so we charged about 10p for a pint of beer. A beef and pig roast was done by local farmers too. A great evening and another I can't remember what time I went to bed!"

"It's not a job, it's a way of life with long hours. You need a good sense of humour, patience and of course a good wife! I have to get that in. I hope I can make it to 45 years and Val's said that's enough!"

Jon Scudamore



Branch chairman John McLaughlin (left) presents the award to Andy and Val.

## BIBULOUS BELGIAN BEER BREAK

The Annual Cross-Channel Beer Excursion, organised by local CAMRA stalwart Doug Dillow and his sons Carl and Kevin, has long been a highlight of the local beer year. So it was that dawn on Friday 27th April saw a group of local CAMRA members and friends, bleary-eyed, boarding a coach at Coachway heading for Belgium. By early afternoon we had arrived at **Bosteels Brewery** in Flanders.

Bosteels brew *Kwak*, noted for its distinctive retort-and-wooden-stand beer receptacle (right). This, we were told by our guide, arose when Napoleon forbade coachmen from disembarking to refresh themselves when their vehicle stopped at a tavern to change horses. The ingenious local brewer in Bosteels devised a beer holder to attach to the coach so the coachman could be handed up a suitable vessel from which to imbibe. Later the holder was modified to sit on a table and the *Kwak* ale apparatus was born.



After a tour of the brewery, we repaired to the brewery bar to sample *Kwak* and its sisters, the unique multi-grain *Tripel Karmeliet* and *Deus*, a beer making a creditable effort to be a champagne. To mark our visit, the traditional certificate of appreciation was presented to the brewery by Doug.

Thence to the city of Liege, one of the main centres of the former industrial heartland of Belgium, southern French-speaking Wallonia. Here we checked into our excellent hotel, the Ramada City Centre, before fanning out to explore. It didn't take long for many to gravitate to the well-named **Beer Lovers** bar, where a superb selection of local Belgian beers was on offer.

Next morning, after a superb breakfast including the likes of bacon and scrambled eggs, far beyond the usual limp cheese, soggy ham and roll "Continental Breakfast", it was

back on the coach for a day in Luxembourg. We paused en route through the forested hills of the Ardennes at the fascinating museum to the 1944 Battle of the Bulge at Malmédy.

Thence to Luxembourg the city, capital of Luxembourg the country. This belies its euro-boring reputation, being built around and in a spectacular ravine. Nor indeed was the beer by any means bland euro-fizz. The keen ale antennae of former branch Pubs Officer, now Cornish resident, Lyn Norman sniffed out the superb **Konrad** bar, near the Palace of the Grand Eurocrat, sorry Duke. We had the beer cellar of this vibrant café to ourselves and there became ensconced to sample the diverse beer range of superb Luxembourg brewer Simon. Their *Okult* was particularly notable.



Whilst some of our party simply crossed the road to sample the couple of Simon's bieres the Konrad did not have on tap in the **Go Ten** café, the more adventurous descended into the depths of the Luxembourgish Grand Canyon to seek out riverside alehouse **Scott's**. Sadly the beers on offer were mere euro-fizz, unworthy of the superb and scenic location.

After several hours it was back to Liege, where more hosteleries were explored. Notable amongst them the 16th Century gem **Tchantches and Nanesse**, hidden in a dingy side street in what otherwise was clearly the low-rent neighbourhood across the river Meuse from our hotel. Those of our party who stumbled upon it enjoyed excellent beers by Becheresse and a true Burgundian feast of cordon bleu standard food cooked by the landlord's son. After consuming all we could and successfully explaining the concept of



# BIBULOUS BELGIAN BEER BREAK

"doggy bag", landlord Francois regaled us with the tale of his father, whose paintings of marionettes from around the world, including our own Punch & Judy, combine with actual marionettes to give the pub its intriguing and unusual theme.



Sunday morning saw us in the Ardennes once more, where deep in the woods live Les Chouffes, the Little People, who brew d'Achouffe's excellent beers. After the obligatory tour of the brewery, started as a hobby by two brothers-in-law but now a major business, we headed to the Tasting Room. There we sampled Achouffe's most tasty range and Doug again presented a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the branch.



Thence to Bouillon – which appears to mean "Soup" – in the south-western extremity of Belgium beside the French border. A lovely village in a river valley, under the grim grey stones of the 11th Century castle of Godfrey of Bouillon, a leading light of the First Crusade (curiously none of the village pubs were called The Saracen's Head). Here some of us repaired to **Roy de la Moule**, where traditional Belgian boiled bivalves complement traditional Belgian brewed beer. Next door was **Chez Betty** café, where the mussels could be washed down with local brew *La Corne du Bois des Pendus* ("The Hanged Wood Horn" – no doubt a story lies behind that brew's name but sadly we did not find out what it was, although the brewery dates back to 1636). Said brew is served in a glass ale horn borne in a wooden holder.



Returning to Liege some of us essayed a final pub crawl, taking in the typical backstreet café **Randaxhe** and cosy pub **A Pilori** before inevitably ending up in the **Beer Lovers**.



Next morning we were, sadly, on our way home. However, there was time to call in at Mons on the way. Here a hard core of cerevisiophiles essayed a gallant last stand in **La Cervoise** and **La Maison des Brasseurs** in the main square. After which it remained only to battle our way home through howling wind and rain and Channel Tunnel delays to return tired but happy to our homes.

Organisers Doug, Carl and Kevin Dillow and our indefatigable driver Colin deserve our heartfelt thanks for a superb weekend. Dillow & Sons are running another trip next year – why don't you join us?

Steve Brady

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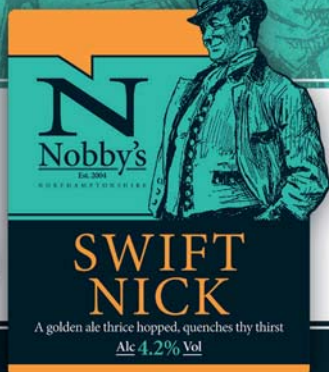
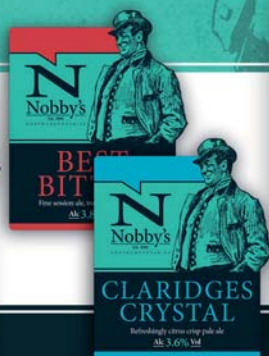
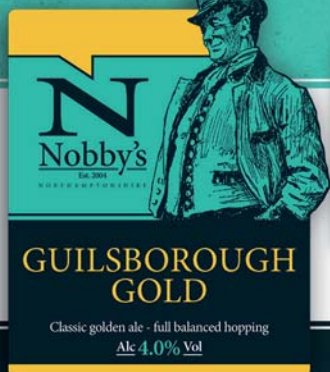
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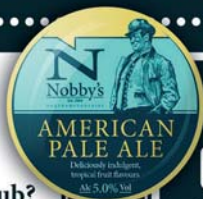
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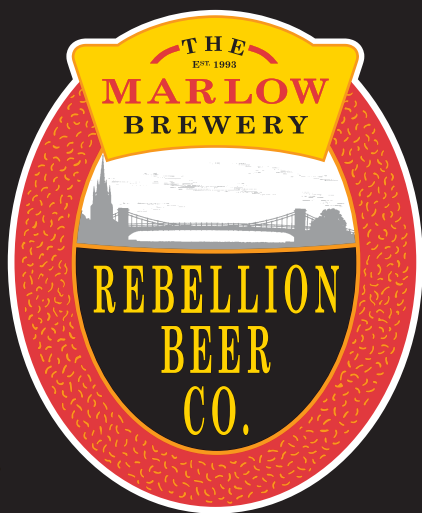
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