



Milton Keynes & North Bucks CAMRA Branch Magazine

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beer moos

Summer 2017

Issue Forty Two

CONCRETE PINT 2017

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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

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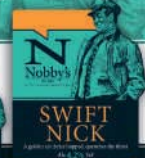
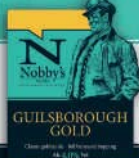
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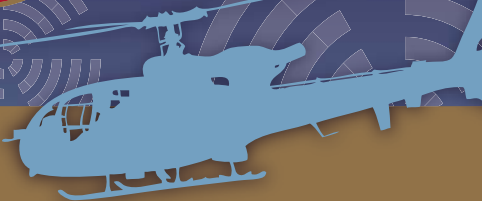
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Editor's Beef

A couple of issues back in issue 40 I warned that the globalised megakeggeries would doubtless respond to the rise of craft keg beer by "devouring" as much of it as they can. Now none less than the *Times* has echoed Moos' warning.



In its August 13th issue, the "Newspaper of Record" agreed with us that "The big brewers are moving stealthily into the market by buying up well-known brands but leaving the impression that they are still small and independent."

Ed Mason, owner of the Five Points Brewing Company in Hackney, east London, has dubbed these brands "Trojan horses" which could be used by big brewers to infiltrate the market and undercut craft brewers. "Many consumers don't realise that what looks like an independent, local craft beer on the bar can often be owned by one of the global lager brands," the *Times* quoted Mr. Mason as saying.

The newspaper noted that in July Carlsberg bought up London Fields craft brewery and in August Japan's Sapporo gobbled up pioneering US craft brewer Anchor Brewing. Camden Town Brewery is already owned by AB InBev, maker of the delectable Budweiser, whilst Asahi, Japan's largest brewer, owns the Meantime brewery in Greenwich.

The *Times* reporter checked out the craft beers devoured by the megakeggeries and – surprise! surprise! – found there was not a mention on the bottle that they are actually not, as they seemed, brewed by independent local producers but spewed from the bowels of global corporate giants.

As with the "help" AB InBev is giving to the main breweries in Cuba, reported elsewhere in this issue, the global corporocrats aren't investing in craft beer out of the goodness of their hearts or a desire to improve the beers offered to local drinkers. They are doing it to use economies of scale to undercut the small craft brewers they can't buy up and drive them to the wall. Then they can go back to pushing cheap, mass-produced bland "world beers".

However, we can fight back – the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) has launched an "Assured independent British craft brewer" seal to be used on craft beer packaging, so that consumers know what they are buying. Moos would urge our readers to check for this when buying craft beers and help keep our small independent breweries alive.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Beer Moos will be published on or around Sept 1st. We must have your stories, news and advertisements by: Dec 21st. Late copy cannot be guaranteed entry.

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It will be apparent that a number of Branch Offices remain vacant this year. If you are a member of MK & NB CAMRA and might be interested in filling any of them, please contact our Vice Chairman, Alan Fursdon (contact details above), who will be happy to advise what the posts involve.

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 at PO BOX 105, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3HH Telephone 01908 252433. Email: tsd@milton-keynes.gov.uk or Buckingham Trading Standards at 5-7 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1UP, Tel: 08454 040506. Local Bus information & timetables are available at www.arrivabus.co.uk

To Advertise

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



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Diary Dates

Please note that diary information is always subject to change. Check online for latest information at

www.mkcamra.org.uk

Branch meetings are held on a variable day in the first week of every month. For dates and venues see website.

SEPTEMBER

Monday 11th

Branch Special Extraordinary General Meeting. 8pm at the Cannon, Newport Pagnell High St.

Thursday 14th

Good Beer Guide launch social. 7pm onwards at Wetherspoons CMK. Copies of the new Guide available at discounted prices.

OCTOBER

Branch Meeting in first week.

Saturday 7th

Newport Pagnell Crawl. Meet in The Kings Arms Tickford Street 12:30pm.

Wednesday 18th to Saturday 21st

Concrete Pint Beer Festival, Snozone, Xscape, CMK. See page 9 in this issue for details.

Saturday 28th

Fenny Stratford and Bletchley Crawl. Meet in The Red Lion, Fenny 12:30pm.

NOVEMBER

Branch Meeting in first week.

Thursday 9th

Great Horwood Social (rescheduled from September). Meet Wetherspoons CMK 7:30pm for shared taxis to The Crown and The Swan and return.

Saturday 18th

St. Albans Crawl. Meet Milton Keynes Central Station 10.00am for 10.22am train to St. Albans via Watford.

Wednesday 29th

New Members' and Beer Festival Staff Social, 8pm, Wetherspoon's, 201 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK9 1EA

DECEMBER

Branch Meeting in first week.

Saturday 9th

Traditional pre-Christmas Northampton Crawl. Meet Albion Brewery Bar, 54, Kingswell Street, Northampton NN1 1PR, 12.30pm.

Sunday 24th

Usual Christmas Eve Social. Meet Wetherspoon's, 201 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK9 1EA from 2pm onward.

See website for further information. If you would like to receive details of Branch events by email, please contact

social@mkcamra.org.uk

Have you Scored yet?

CAMRA's National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is an easy 0-5 point scale for judging beer quality. It is used to find out which pubs consistently sell well kept ale. The results help us to decide which pubs to consider for the Good Beer Guide. All CAMRA members can submit beer scores for any pub in the UK.

Please go to whatpub.com and log in using your membership number and password. Locate the pub's web page. If you are using the desktop version, Beer Scoring appears on the right hand side of the page. If you are using the mobile version, click on the *Submit Beer Scores* tab.

Enter the date that you visited the pub, the name of the brewery and the name of the beer. Using the scale to the right, select your score. Once complete, click on Submit Score.

If you would like more information on beer scoring, please contact database@mkcamra.org.uk

0	No Real Ale	No cask-conditioned ale available
1	Poor	Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.
2	Average	Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.
3	Good	Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.
4	Very Good	Excellent beer in excellent condition.
5	Perfect	Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

Great British Beer Festival 2017

What's great British, great fun, offers great choice, and is 40 years old this year? Why, CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival of course, which ended its fortieth annual run on August 12th at London's Kensington Olympia.



The festival, known to friend and foe alike as GBBF, dubs itself 'The World's Biggest Pub', and that is scarcely an exaggeration as there are around 800 beers (your scribe didn't even try to count them all!) in bars spread through Olympia's two vast halls, plus 110 or so ciders and perries. And that's before counting the huge selection of bottled beers from the UK (with special emphasis this year on Manchester's breweries), USA, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, Germany, the Czech Republic and many more – a true world of beer to savour and enjoy.

Given such an embarrassment of choice, the punter can really only scratch the surface of what's on offer. It is a good idea to drink only third-pints of as many beers as possible though that usually means rather a lot of queuing – at one point, at the American Draft Beer bar, which is always massively popular and always runs out early, it was a case of get your third and loop back to the rear of the queue to sip your beer, finishing it in time to be served the next third!

A major feature of the GBBF is the announcement of the Champion Beer of Britain. This year it was Goat's Milk from Warwickshire brewer Church End. Those prepared to queue can even taste it!



Understandably a festival like this gets very busy, and seats can be hard to find, and harder to keep, in the evenings, though plentiful seating is provided. As ever, a good range of food stalls, including a superb cheese one, were on hand to help soak up all that beer. There was a great selection of traditional pub games to try, live music to tap your feet to (or plug your ears to, according to taste.....!!), tombola to try your luck at, tee-shirts, Viking drinking horns, and other merchandise to buy, and various, genuinely deserving, charities to tug at your conscience and purse-strings. All that was missing, in your scribe's opinion, was anywhere to buy a strong black coffee!

Visiting GBBF is always a great experience and I will be back next year. Meanwhile we can all look forward to Milton Keynes's very own Concrete Pint beer festival at the Snozone from October 18th - 21st. See y'all there!

Jim Scott

The Red Lion

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Brewery & LocAle News

Bucks Star Beer are driving their zero-waste, GrowlerSwap campaign forward, bringing growler-conditioned beers to market, having now launched a delivery service within Milton Keynes.



A growler is a glass bottle used to carry quantities of beer and swapping them is a way of stopping cans and bottles from being thrown

away or recycled. The name is said to come from lunch pails miners used to transport beer in the 19th Century.

Datis Gol, who is the head brewer and founder of the city's Bucks Star eco-beer brand, said: "Earth Overshoot Day, which marks the point in the year when humans started taking more from the planet than the planet is able to produce, was on Wednesday August 2nd."

"We can and must all do our bit and Growler Swap is one lifestyle change we can easily make. Re-using is far better for the planet than recycling, which is better than throwing away, because you only have to clean the growler for it to be re-used, instead of having to use energy to smash up the glass or cans and turn them into bottles and cans again.

"We are hoping to show that it is possible to be in business and to make money from being good to the planet."

The idea is that people purchase ale-filled growlers, enjoy the growler-conditioned beer and then swap their empty vessel for a new one.

Instead of being trashed, the used growler is then cleaned and sterilised and available for use again.

Datis added that the scheme is not restricted to Bucks Star beers; other breweries will be able to have their beers made available, too.

He added: "As well as being good for the planet and the local economy, this is the freshest beer that people can buy and consume as it is not sitting around on a shelf for days."

A growler delivery service is now also available in the MK1 to MK15 postcode area, so customers can get their ale direct to their doorstep.

Datis, who is also one of the movers and shakers behind the small business and eco-promotion movement known as Bucks Festival, said: "I obviously hope that people will come back for beer from Bucks Star but once they have purchased a growler, they don't have to!

"I hope that people will support us and other local brewers

because reducing the beer miles also helps the planet.

"Evidence is mounting that climate change is reaching unstoppable levels but we can all do our bit by reducing the amount of energy used in so many ways, including in the real ale that we consume."

To find out more about Growler Swap visit <http://buckinghamshirebeer.co.uk> and/or like the Facebook page www.facebook.com/pg/GrowlerSwap

Bucks Festival part 2 is also taking place at Westbury Arts Centre on 23rd September, continuing with the theme of small, independent businesses with a sustainable model and focusing on quality. More information can be found on Facebook or Twitter at [@BucksFestival](https://twitter.com/BucksFestival)

We hear that Dan Bonner of **Concrete Cow** has been unwell. Beer Moos and its readers wish a speedy recovery to this key player on the LocAle Scene.

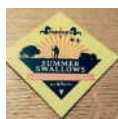


Hart Family Brewers

in Wellingborough are opening a Brewery Tap at a converted old house in the town. Keep an eye on their Twitter account

(<https://twitter.com/hartfamilybeer?lang=en>) for latest news.

Horne's Dark Fox made its debut at the Great British Beer Festival where it went down well. Summer Swallows



was their new summer seasonal beer, the final batch of which has just been brewed.



XT have launched a beer pioneering the use of new British hop varieties. The beer called 'Brit Hop' a 5% pale ale uses as yet unreleased hops as part of the British Hop



Association development programme. The beer was available first at the XT Brewery Bar in Olympia for the Great British Beer Festival, and will then be available for a limited time in selected pubs in the local area.

The aim of the programme is to produce varieties that are capable of rivaling US and other new world hops for flavour. The development successes so far have included new British varieties such as Jester, Olican and Minstrel.

XT have been selected to brew with the experimental varieties and provide feedback both on the technicalities during brewing and how the hop flavours perform in trade and whether the customers like or dislike the beers

Another area of beer R&D for XT has been the development of their new "craft lager" Eisbar. The first trial batches of the new 5% Vienna style lager which is both unfiltered and unpasteurised - sold out so fast the brewery had to limit its release. The beer is properly "lagered" which means it is held to condition naturally for six weeks, which presents a few production and capacity issues for the brewer. As a result of the success of the trials and to meet demand new specialist lagering vessels are being installed over the summer. The beer will be available from a short list of selected pubs from later in August.



The Animal cask beers have proven to be very popular over the years and as a birthday celebration – a series of re-brews have been selected by landlords, beer club members and devoted drinkers. The first revisit is Buffalo the American Amber, later will see the return of other old favourites such as Manta Ray and Heron.

XT beer is on tour and travelling abroad in September to represent British brewing – Munich for DrinkTech and Slovenia with the British Chamber of Commerce.

Champion Beer of Britain and Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2018

Voting for these online starts on September 1st and finishes on 31st October. All CAMRA members can vote and all the local breweries reported on in this issue have eligible beers.

Go to <http://www.camra.org.uk/about-awards> for details

Pub News

The **Biergarten** in Wolverton will continue its regular Bierclub from September on the second Monday of the month. Forthcoming topics: September - Collaboration beers, October - German beers, November – Malt, December - Christmas beers. On 28th October the 'garten will be putting on a traditional Oktoberfest at York House in Stony Stratford – see separate report.

The **Bletchley Arms** has been a hive of building activity and will reopen as **Captain Ridley's Shooting Party** on Tuesday 5th December.

The fire-damaged **Bull** in Olney remains closed whilst planning issues are addressed. In July a meeting took place between owners Wells Brewery and representatives of Olney Town and Milton Keynes Councils to discuss conditions imposed when Wells' proposed redevelopment was granted planning permission. Wells are now looking to discharge these conditions and preliminary work on the refurbishment has finally begun.

The **Chequers** Fenny Stratford has been extensively refitted and will reopen shortly, still under the ownership of Vale Brewery. Keep an eye on their Twitter Feed for latest news: <https://twitter.com/ChequersFenny>



The **Cowper's Oak** in Weston Underwood re-opened in May under the leadership of Debbie and Joe Decaro, who have a wide experience in the catering business. When we called early on a Saturday lunchtime, it was all systems go for a busy session, and there were 5 contrasting ales ready to delight customers.



On Tuesday 15th August Branch Acting Chairman Alan Fursdon presented the Branch Award for the Most Improved Pub of 2017 to Hannah Edwards, licensee of the **Cross Keys**,

Woolstone. 11 Branch members came along to the event. Eight of them entered as 2 teams in the pub's regular 8pm Tuesday evening Quiz. Sadly neither team won!

The **Crooked Billet**, Newton Longville, has re-opened after extensive refurbishment, without spoiling its original features. There is a lovely new Ladies' loo and facilities for disabled persons. The new incumbent is John Anderson, ably assisted by Tabitha.

The **Dolphin** in Newport Pagnell High Street was closed for some weeks over the summer. It re-opened on Friday 25th August.



The **George** in Winslow now serves food. Landlady Rachel showed local CAMRA members around her



new upstairs restaurant when they visited the pub on their tour of the town's pubs on Saturday 19th August.



There are new owners at the **Lowndes Arms** in Waddon, which is now a freehouse. Mark Goyen and his son Dan now run this characterful village pub. Dan has been one of the management team

at the Eight Belles in Bletchley for some years. When our reporter called, the pub seemed pleasantly busy for a Tuesday.



The **King's Head** Buckingham may now be styling itself as a Gin & Coffee House, but it still has a couple of real ales on handpull, with one often LocAle (Towcester Mill on a recent visit

by our intrepid reporter). They also offer two 'craft beer' taps with Purity Longhorn IPA a permanent feature plus a guest (Jarl from Fyne Ales on this visit). Three ciders were on offer direct from the cellar - Orchard Pig Explorer, Abrahalls Lily the Pink and Westons Flat Tyre (Rhubarb) on this visit. They have a very extensive list of gins, with well over fifty listed in their menu, including the local, award-winning, Foxdenton range.



The **Mitre**, Buckingham continues to stock an interesting range of beers, frequently featuring LocAle from Blackpit.

The **New Inn**, Buckingham, hosted a Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA Branch Meeting on August 3rd. The Black Sheep on handpull was in good form.



Landlord Simon will leave the **Robin Hood**, Clifton Reynes on 6th October. Discussions are under way with a view to the pub then being taken over by a consortium of local villagers. This has worked well in saving village pubs, a classic and much-loved example being the Old Crown at Heskett Newmarket in northern Cumbria.

The **Royal British Legion** in Newport Pagnell may be under threat. MK Council apparently are considering selling the building rather than paying for repairs needed, which may be both extensive and expensive. The Royal British Legion get the building for a peppercorn rent and currently have until next summer to find a new location.



The **Three Cups**, Buckingham, has a new-ish landlord - he's been there less than six months. Beers on offer in this refreshingly old-school locals' pub on our recent visit were St. Austell Tribute and Sharp's Doom Bar - the 'Trib' was in decent nick.

Stony Stratford Cricket Club held a very successful Beer Festival over the 8th/9th July weekend with 39 ales on tap. This has become a welcome annual event..



The **White Horse** in Stony Stratford looks to have an issue with its signage!



The **Woolpack**, Buckingham, continues to offer up to four real ales and an improved selection has been seen on recent visits. LocAle from Gun Dog has been a regular feature.

CONCRETE PINT 2017

Venue: SnoZone, Xscape, Milton Keynes

Date: 18th - 21st October 2017



Milton Keynes' very own Concrete Pint beer festival will be a unique event for CAMRA. It will be the very first time a CAMRA Beer Festival will take place overlooking ski slopes!

The Concrete Pint Beer & Cider Festival will celebrate its 24th year at a new venue, with the volunteers of Milton Keynes & North Buckinghamshire CAMRA branch utilising the Snozone (in Xscape) since the Old Bus Station is no longer available to us. (But every cloud has a silver lining, since I believe the latest plan for our old venue is to use it as a proper and more permanent venue for the homeless. Fingers crossed on that!)



Over the years Concrete Pint has attracted thousands of visitors seeking the taste of quality drinking. This year's main theme will mark the 50th anniversary of the birth of Milton Keynes. To celebrate the golden jubilee we plan to offer you '50 new beers for a new city' – 50 beers never before sold here – among the 100+ beers on offer.

Our regular feature of locally produced beers and ciders, such as Concrete Cow from Bradwell Abbey, Hornes from Bow Brickhill and Virtual Orchard from Potterspury will continue, as will the "Keykeg" wall of "craft beers" introduced to acclaim last year. There will also be the popular Belgian beer selection, plus cider & perry, prosecco and the usual free soft drinks. As always, there will be festival food, souvenir festival glasses, and discounts for CAMRA members. While looking forward to our first outing at MK's famous Snozone, we will resist any mention of a beer festival on the piste.

As Snozone capacity is limited, you can buy advanced tickets online. This will give you guaranteed entry and Q-Jump on your chosen day plus free admission for non-members and a FREE 1/2 pint of LocAle for CAMRA members.

To join CAMRA before the Festival visit www.camra.org.uk/join.

But there are only 100 tickets available online for each day, so buy early! The remaining tickets will be sold on the door.



Admission for CAMRA members is free throughout the Festival or £3 for non-members.

The opening times will be:

Wednesday 18th - 16-23:00.

Thursday 19th to Saturday 21st - 12-23:00

Snozone (Xscape, 602 Marlborough Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 3XS) is located in the centre of Milton Keynes with many buses passing nearby, including regular busses from Milton Keynes Central train & bus station.

For more details, visit www.concretepint.com – which we will be updating regularly.



Cider On A Sunday

Jase Jarratt reports on a Branch expedition into the furthest West Midlands

According to CAMRA May is Mild Month. According to CAMRA May is also one of two Cider Months, the other being in October when cider makers are at their busiest, hence the need for another opportunity to celebrate the finest of fruit-based beverages. When you think of cider and perry, you probably think of its West Country heartlands, or Herefordshire and Worcestershire, maybe even East Anglia or Kent. So obviously we assembled on a Sunday morning in May to board a train to the Midlands town of Tamworth, better known for a breed of pig and plastic three-wheeled cars.

On arrival, a brief cultural tour through the streets of the town saw us arrive at our first port of call, the Grade II listed Moat House. Set back off the Lichfield Road, this Tudor mansion has seen better days, but the current owners are trying to turn things around and have returned real ale to the bar. There was no cider available here, but it provided an opportunity for a bite to eat and the regular beer, Thwaites Wainwright, gave us an easy start. The empty casks in the huge rear garden suggested that more interesting beer choices had been available.



A short detour via the town's fine Norman Castle and on to the Market Vaults in the town centre, current local branch Pub of the Year. The pub was doing a roaring

trade on Sunday roasts and finding space to sit inside this small traditional pub was challenging. There were around 15 ciders available here, mostly at the sweeter end of the spectrum. However, none of our group had eyes for anything other than the choice of eight beers on the bar. Former Champion Beer of Britain, 1872 Porter

from Elland, and the Joules Pale Ale proved to be popular, especially with a CAMRA discount available.

Onwards to the Sir Robert Peel next. Four ciders available here, but again no takers due to the choice of five beers on offer. Local brews feature heavily here and the pub even has a house beer brewed by Church End. It was another dark beer that grabbed people's attention though, Riverside Stout from Froth Blowers delivering a rich, smooth and tasty experience typical of the style. There's a decent selection of bottled beers too if the handpulls don't take your fancy.

Our group divided at this point, many heading for our final destination while others went exploring a little. The Penny Black offered a small range of big name regional brews in decent nick, plus a bit of banter with the locals. As is typical of many pubs in the Stonegate portfolio, food and live televised sport dominate, so we made a Proper Job of the St Austell brew and moved on.

We regrouped at the King's Ditch, Tamworth's first and only micropub and one of four finalists in CAMRA's national Cider Pub of the



Year competition. It offers an impressive cider and perry list numbering around 30 in total, from sweet to bone dry.



Up to six ales dispensed direct from casks in the cool room are available too, the pouring activities shown live on the pub's TV. Local beers again dominate, with an effort made to offer a different range to other town pubs. After trying beers from the likes of Littleover and Beowulf, there were finally a few willing to dabble in the perry and cider ranges.

With our objective achieved, most headed back down the tracks to MK, but a hardy few made some additional stops on the return journey. First up was Atherstone and the Angel Ale House, another local PotY offering great choices of beer and cider. A swift half across the square in the Market Tavern, a Warwickshire Brewery outlet, followed. Back on the train and time allowed one further stop. Rugby and the Alexander Arms was chosen to sample the on-site Atomic Brewery's beer.

London Midland trains operate a direct service between MK Central and Tamworth seven days a week with a walk-up super off-peak fare currently £18.30. Discounts are available for certain railcards and group bookings and advance bookings can be considerably cheaper. Virgin also offer a limited service. Note that the London Midland franchise will be replaced in December 2017.

A microbrewery is due to open in Tamworth later in 2017. No doubt we shall return! Join CAMRA and you could come with us...

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40th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th October 2017

Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL

Open Wed 4-11, Thu Fri 12-11
Sat 11.30-10.30

Admission before 4pm: £1
After 4pm: Wed £2, Thu £3,
Fri £4, Sat £2

CAMRA members free

No under 18s: ID required

Souvenir glass £2.50 sale or return

Hot + cold food all sessions



Free soft drinks

Tombola and pub game

Engraver

Mead and chocolate stalls

Short street pass-outs

Wheelchair access to all floors

Live music Wed and Sat eves

160 real ales + 50 ciders and perries

Draught and bottled international beers



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northbeds.camra.org.uk



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North-West Passage

Finbar Lyttleton joined us on the first Social of 2017 which saw us heading to Hanslope to visit the 3 most North Westerly outposts of our branch. Here is his (belated!) report.

Half a dozen of us boarded the midday 33 bus by MK Theatre. With more joining at the Point and the railway station our number had grown to about 15 by the time we alighted by the Watts Arms. A couple more made it under their own steam. A short circuit of the bar revealed an ample selection of beers was available, mostly from the Wells/Youngs vaults but also one from Vale, Brill Gold, which proved quite illuminating. None were refused and every last drop was drunk with little resistance. We had planned to have lunch in the Watts but we'd found out a couple of days earlier that the kitchen would be closed just for the day. Forewarned is forearmed - so most of us had either had an early lunch or brought sandwiches but a hot meal would have gone down much better on such a cold day!

A short walk up the High Street and it was time for our ever swelling group of members to put The Cock Inn to the test. Entering from the rear, hard on the heels of the Brill we found Oakley Wagtail on the bar. Pints ordered, we snaffled a table by the roaring fire. Plenty of wood was at hand to keep up the heat and an occasional poke ensured an even burn. The Cock doesn't do meals but the friendly staff beaver away behind the bar were ok with us gobbling our own nuts, crisps and sandwiches. Hobnobbing with a group of regulars who had also brought their own food (black pudding scotch eggs, sausage rolls, cheese, crackers, bread - the week prior pickled plums had even been on offer) it was great to see folk coming together and enjoying a picnic with excellent beer for lubrication. They very generously invited us to help finish it off - a happy ending for all. Feeling satisfied, we then shot off for the last call of the day: our 2016 Branch Club of the Year - The Club. However, long standing member, the lovely Samantha, was enjoying the Cock Inn cider so much she decided to stay for another round with the



country boys, but assured us she would be in The Club later.

The Club is a diamond at the heart of the community with real ale in spades. We teed off with a pint of NBC Becketts Ale which was certainly above par. A little birdy had flagged up to the bar steward that we hadn't been able to get food at the Watts Arms and, as if by magic, he appeared at our side with a huge course of complimentary wedges and slices of cheese and crackers. That went a fair way to staving off any further hunger pangs. Next we boosted our spirits by giving the Adnams Mosaic a twirl. Final beer of our marathon revels was NBA Phipps IPA.

A breakaway group left early as we'd heard a whisper that the bus service in the evening was a bit flakey. There was a ripple of excitement as the last bus back to CMK (unfortunately not a double decker) hove in to view. We felt sorry for the driver, expecting his last trip to be a picnic, only to be confronted by a swarm of tired and emotional CAMRoids!

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MK Biergarten Brings Traditional Oktoberfest Celebrations to Stony Stratford

On Saturday the 28th October the MK Biergarten and York House are collaborating to celebrate the most famous of all German beer festivals. Between 12pm and 10pm, the York House Community Centre will play host to a traditional German Oktoberfest bar, Bavarian food and oompah style music.

In the main room of York House, staff in traditional Bavarian dress will be serving Paulaner Oktoberfestbier and Paulaner Weissbier. For visitors who would like to toast the event with a local brew, Hornes Brewery from Bow Brickhill will have a small Real Ale bar upstairs. The brass band Der Huffunpuffers will entertain the thirsty crowds from 7pm with Bavarian style oompah music.



MK Biergarten has made all efforts to keep the event as authentic as possible, while making use of the wonderful range of local businesses the area has to offer. Food will be provided by the street food businesses Urban Grilla and Good Times Cafe UK. Urban Grilla will be serving traditional German beer sausages, made by Bourton Farmed Foods from Buckingham, and Good Times Cafe will tempt visitors with hot cheese sandwiches. On the bar giant pretzels from Geoff's Real Artisan Bread, also based in Buckingham, will be on sale all day.

Franzi Florack, the manager of the Biergarten says: 'We are delighted to assemble such a fantastic range of local businesses at this wonderful German-style event. Oktoberfest in Germany is a time of community, dressing up in your finest and celebrating the best food and drink Bavaria has to offer. As an experienced Oktoberfest visitor myself, the Biergarten has worked very hard to make the event as inviting and authentic as possible.'

This is the second year that MK Biergarten and York House centre are running the festival. Franzi continues: 'We had such a great time last year that we really wanted to organise another local Oktoberfest. In 2017, over 400 people came to celebrate this special German festival with us and we look forward to sharing the Bavarian love for beer and a good time once more with the people of Milton Keynes.'

Entry is £10 on the door or £8 in advance on www.mkbiergarten.co.uk and includes a commemorative glass and a first pint. Entry will be limited to 500 guests so advance purchase is advised. Children are welcome until 8pm and their entry is free. Anyone attending in traditional dress will receive a £2 discount on the door. A small selection of wine and soft drinks will be available on the day.



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DESERT ISLAND BEERS

It's Christmas time in 1979 and I am in a remote public house called the Hampden Arms, Mid Bucks. Time has obviously put some spin on this because the pub appears mainly full of smugglers, pirates and bearded people – what do you expect in the 70s? The landlord is a grizzly wisecracking pirate for sure, because he had a wooden leg and consequently walks with a distinctive gait. I ask for a packet of crisps and he growls “large or small”. “Small” I say and he puts the bag on the counter and beats it several times with his fist. Guffaws and laughter peel out around me from bearded pirates. I ask for a pint of Owd Roger, and feel respect restored. This Marstons pint is legendary in my mind, it is a dark strong beer with rich fruit flavours and the Hampden Arms has it on the bar every Christmas. At 7.4%, it complements small pieces of crisp and makes me laugh with all my piratonical associates. Piratonical isn't actually a word, but you get my drift.



Moving to the early 1980s and I am now a student at Sheffield City Polytechnic. Dave Wickett, my economics tutor, hasn't yet started up Kelham Island brewery although he has by now opened the Fat Cat P.H. However my regular haunt is a pub called the Museum and the beer I drink in it will be coming along to my desert island - it's Castle Eden. You can imagine that as a student I put a few of these away: it was a session ale, but mild in the spectrum of bitter. It is described as an interesting contrast between an initial sweet surge of flavour followed by a slightly bitter aftertaste. I haven't drunk this beer since the 80s, and I doubt whether it is still in the same format. The brewery was closed down in 2002, and production was moved to Camerons Brewery. Camerons announced the return of Castle Eden Ale production in 2013.

Moving now into the 1990s and I am living in Milton Keynes, and to my delight I have heard that some innovative and enthusiastic, frankly brilliant, people, are staging a CAMRA beer festival in Wolverton's Madcap theatre. This allows me to enjoy a superb pint at a festival in my home town. The beer however is a long way from home, in fact from the Orkneys – it's my third beer; Raven Ale. A biscuity toasty malt flavour gives way to a clean spicy orange bitterness. Well who could resist, and this beer gets a rave review in my 1993 diary, leaving a happy memory of being young and unencumbered.

Unencumbered days come to an end with marriage and kids, but as a consequence of Wimbledon F.C. moving to MK I become re-acquainted with a Sheffield United fanatic; it's Dave Wickett, now running Kelham Island brewery and a year before my fourth beer - Pale Rider - will win Champion Beer of Britain. However it isn't until February 2006 that I sample it when he gives my brother and me a tour of his brewery. This golden hoppy pale is for me the ultimate session ale. It slips down well every time I visit the Fat Cat, a perfect complement to the vibrant conversations I have enjoyed with Dave ranging from economics to beer and ending up with football.

It is April 2007 and I am in my absolute element of beer appreciation and I have travelled with some old friends to surf on the beach here at Woolacombe. My dismal efforts at trying to stand on the board have worked up a thirst and I have spotted a beer with an interesting name and pump clip. My fifth beer for the Desert Island may raise some eyebrows, because it's Doombar. My friends and I buy pint after pint of this terrific fresh and hoppy ale but I will insert a caveat here; I mean the beer I am drinking in the Golden Hind, Woolacombe, as brewed by Sharp's original Head Brewer Stuart Howe. Not the product found on every bar in the land ten years later via the Coors takeover.

The following year on impulse I have dashed over to Bedford Beer Festival on the Marston Line and chosen a pint I have never had before – and I wish I had ordered a half. It is Black Sheep Riggwelter, and I'm not sure whether I'm going to finish the pint. But something keeps me taking another gulp. This first meeting has produced mixed feelings, but over the coming days I realise that my

beer fidelity has once again been compromised because I am in love with yet another beer. At 5.7% it will give you a quick lift, but it doesn't possess a mild personality, it is a rich full flavour, a brown beer. Chocolate and prunes are mentioned in reviews. It was an unforgettable first encounter, and it is my sixth choice.

By the time I first drink my next choice another seven years have rolled by - enjoyable years with new friends made when I joined CAMRA in 2008. It is 2015 and I have met Datis Gol through the branch and visited his new brewery in Stonebridge. Datis is brewing a beer called Bucks Star No. 1, and those of you who have watched Harry Potter films will understand that it is the beer that chooses the drinker. At the opening of the brewery the beer immediately makes a connection with me, it conditions me spiritually in the same way as Pale Rider. The beer is unfiltered and can be cloudy, a light pale ale with sweet after taste; sociable and not so demanding as some of my other choices might be. For nearly a year I work with Datis to sell it into local pubs - with success until the brewery is put out of service by the fire in an adjoining unit and I return to my job in the coffee industry!

So, we are now up to date, it's August 2017 and my final choice is a bottled beer that I was given as a gift last week. With some similarities to the meeting with Riggwelter, this beer slapped me in the face and made me wonder about life and all of its fascinating possibilities. It is Roots Bloody Roots by Weird Beard, and it has strong liquorice tones. Apparently the medicinal sarsaparilla root is also included; this could be important because we will need to stay healthy on a desert island. I will think about how CAMRA has influenced the health of the beer industry and preserved cask ale. However, there are other essentials to preserve - individuality, flair and craftsmanship. I am glad that all of these will be keeping me good company as I while away the time in my luxury deck chair.

Jon Scudamore



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VIVA HAVANA!

Moos Editor Steve Brady samples Cuban Cerveza

Cuba is a country most people associate with Fidel Castro, rum and cigars. However, beer is widely consumed on the island. As is sadly typical, most emanates from megakeggeries. The ubiquitous – but actually not too bad – Bucanero and the more lagerish Cristal are brewed by State-owned plants operated “in agreement with” the notorious global corporate chemical producer InBev, which has clearly managed to get its foot, or tentacle, in the door here.

Nonetheless, small independent, if still so far essentially State-run, brewpubs have begun to make a more welcome appearance, and I visited the two in the capital Havana on my recent visit there.



In the Plaza Vieja in the Old Town stands the Plaza Vieja Cervezas y Maltas, the oldest brewpub in town, opened in 2003. The brewery and indeed most of the

ingredients of the beers are supplied by Austrian brewery Salm Brau, with the result that the brews on offer are essentially Austrian Biers with Cuban characteristics. The Clara is a slightly darker and cloudier take on a Helles, with an interesting slight buttery aroma, cereal malt notes and a mild hop bitterness on the finish. The Oscura is a Maerzen, with caramel malt on the nose and an earthy hop finish and the Negra is a Dunkel, bursting with caramel and molasses with slight coffee and cocoa hints, the sweetest of the three. All are palatable and distinctively local takes on their Teutonic originals. The bar, like the rest of the Plaza Vieja or Old Square is a lovely old Colonial Spanish structure, with the brewery visible in a sort of giant aquarium. The food is



also worth a try, especially the Dangly Prawns (not what they are called on the menu!).

Down on the seafront in a converted dockside tobacco warehouse is the new kid on the block, Cervceria Antigua Almacen de la Madera y el Tabaco, which opened in 2013. This is a big,



lively establishment with live local music and the brewing apparatus behind the raised bar at the back. Again Salm Brau has provided the kit and the constituents, and again the beers are clearly inspired by the Austrian tradition.



The Helles here however is a striking and rather cloudy orange, which should not put the drinker off as it is really rather good, and the locals'

favourite. Sweet, honeyed notes slide into a dry earthy hop bitterness at the finish. The Maerzen is also dry with notes of dried apple skin and raisin, whilst the Dunkel is somewhat reminiscent of Guinness. Apparently the latter is the tourist favourite but personally I found their Helles to be the beer of the trip. Especially served in a metre-high dispensing tower!

In both establishments beers are about two Cuban Convertible Pesos a litre and ABV's range from 4.2 to 4.6 % - reasonably sessionable. Cuba, incidentally, has two currencies – the Convertible Peso which is pegged to the dollar and allows the tourist or lucky local holder to buy lots of goodies and the National



Peso, which is hard for tourists to get hold of and rather pointless as it buys very little. Beers are normally served in a frosted

glass, which given the rather steamy local temperatures is a plus to my mind – locals call the condensation on the outside of a foaming tankard of beer the vestida de novia, or wedding dress.



A beer-related Cuban drink, widely available, is maltas, essentially carbonated sweet wort and actually quite tasty, if non-alcoholic.

Both of Havana's brewpubs are at pains to point out that unlike their InBevulated megakeggers competitors their beers are made only from water,

malt, hops and yeast, without added sugar. There are plans to open more such brewpubs across the island, which will be most welcome.

Cuba is a fascinating place, with its 1950's cars and friendly people, and still retains its distinctive identity. It's worth a visit before globalisation, as spearheaded on the beer scene by InBev, gobbles it up and assimilates it into just another place like everywhere else.

Steve Brady



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