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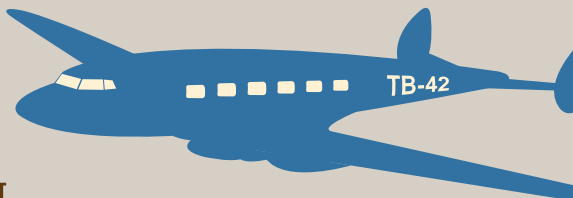
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Editor's Beef

The purpose of my Editorials is to stimulate discussion and debate, and my last one certainly did that, although mostly not on the lines I had hoped.

My intention was to warn against complacency, given that the market forces that were driving out Real Ale brewed by a diversity of brewers in favour of what I called "keg fizz" brewed by a few giant corporations were if anything stronger now than they were when CAMRA was founded in 1971.

Then six national brewers controlled two-thirds of the UK on-sales beer market; today five global brewers control over three-quarters of it, and the two biggest, SAB-Miller and InBev, are merging into one. The forces that make this so, in beer and indeed in many other markets, also exert continual pressure to drive out quality, diversity and craftsmanship in favour of quantity, homogenous blandness and automated mass production, epitomised by "keg fizz".

Which is not the same as craft keg, a confusion to which my editorial evidently gave rise, and for which, to the extent that it was my fault, I apologise.

As I said in my Editorial before the last one, I personally welcome the rise of craft keg, as opposed to megakeg fizz. It has opened the palates of a new generation to the concept of beer which actually has a taste. It adds to the variety of delights open to the discerning drinker, and some of it is, I can testify myself, very good stuff. Given that many German, Belgian and other foreign beers served at CAMRA Beer Festivals for many years would, if brewed here, fall into the "craft keg" category, the most committed cask ale drinker cannot, I think, object.

Whilst I feel CAMRA itself should remain focussed on cask ale (and real cider), I also think we should embrace the craft keg movement, and the passion and skill of its brewers, as welcome allies in the fight against bland megakegery.

Which is their enemy as well as ours. The InBevs of this world do not want to see small quality craft brewers making inroads into the market share of their keg fizz. They will doubtless respond by devouring some of the craft keg movement, as has already happened to Meantime and Camden, and neutering the rest by simply appropriating the "craft" tag - "John Smith's CRAFT Smoothflow" anyone?

So the craft keg movement and CAMRA should work together to defend drinking diversity. Indeed there is a need for something like CAMRA for Craft Keg, started by consumers, producers, or both, which could - as CAMRA has done with the definition of Real Ale - make the word "craft" mean something worth having, and defend the interests of the small brewer and the drinker.

Craft Keg can never replace cask Real Ale. But it can and should supplement it as a welcome addition to choice at the bar. CAMRA and the Craft Keg movement should battle the megakeggeries together!



Steve Brady
Editor

NEXT ISSUE

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

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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

JANUARY

Thursday 26th

Milton Keynes and North Bucks Branch Annual General Meeting at The Barn Central Milton Keynes 8pm.

Further dates will be decided by officers elected at the AGM. See website for further information.

If you would like to receive details of Branch events by email, please contact social@mkcamra.org.uk



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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 below, 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 | <i>No cask-conditioned ale available</i> |
| 1 Poor | <i>Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.</i> |
| 2 Average | <i>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.</i> |
| 3 Good | <i>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.</i> |
| 4 Very Good | <i>Excellent beer in excellent condition.</i> |
| 5 Perfect | <i>Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.</i> |

Locking Horns



A space for, and to spark, frank and open debate on issues around Real Ale and Cider. Views expressed are purely those of the authors. In our opening piece Concrete Cow Brewer and CAMRA member Dan Bonner gives his take on the issues facing CAMRA

Concrete Cow was thrilled to be included in the recent line up of craft keg beers at the Concrete Pint beer festival and really appreciated the support of the festival organiser embracing craft keg. But it's clear that there is some confusion in CAMRA circles as well as the public about craft keg and how it totally differs from the old bland big brewery keg.

Most craft brewery keg beer is brewed in small batches and is unfiltered, unpasteurised and naturally carbonated. Coincidentally three qualities of real ale that CAMRA rightly promote. CAMRA's biggest issue of contention is probably the dispense method which when from stainless steel kegs always means external CO₂ coming into contact with the fresh beer and pushing it through the beer lines. With bag-in-keg technology however the beer never comes into contact with the pressurised CO₂ or even normal everyday compressed air for that matter if that is used instead. The keg effectively is 'reduced in size' each time a pint is pushed through. Cask beer on the other hand is pulled through the lines sucking oxygenated air into the cask as the beer leaves it. Even people with the most basic beer knowledge can work out which of the two methods keeps lovely tasting naturally carbonated small brewery beer tasting freshest for longest. With regards to longevity of quality, it's a done deal, unless of course you prefer the taste of four day old oxygenated cask beer.

What's obvious is that within CAMRA there is a seismic divide and lack of knowledge amongst members, probably due to CAMRA standard bearers shamefully not educating their members on what real ale and other forms of dispense actually mean ... many of whom have no idea about primary/secondary fermentation, cask/bottle conditioned beer, bright beer, filtered, pasteurised, fined or unfined beer and so on. No wonder members are so confused and divided that a 'revitalisation' project was needed to chart future direction. The very name of the

project speaks of self-inflicted desperation, begging to be told what to do by its confused membership. What has happened to the leadership of a once brilliantly simple campaign? A good example of confusion is when volunteers trudge loyally around, promoting the 'Locale' ethos and then have to attend branch meetings and socials held in pubs belonging to giant Pubcos who have no interest in supporting local micros and who care little for their hard working tenants as shown in a recent report. How and when will CAMRA reconcile hypocrisies like this?

CAMRA needs to regain some self-respect, educate its membership, define some basic beer terms including 'craft' and decide on what it really supports ... just real ale? just cask? 'quality', 'craft', keg, 'local', all pubs, pubcos, free houses and not necessarily trying to be all things to all people in an attempt to maximise membership and revenue. If it decides to be everything for all people it will cease to be a campaign and nobody wants that ... except of course the big, filtering, pasteurising force-carb keg brewers!



Brewery & LocAle News

Bucks Star will release their take on a Pilsner style beer in commemoration of MK's 50th birthday in 2017. The new brew will be called Mideltone Pils (5% ABV) and may become part of the brewery's



core range alongside No.1 (a pale ale). Mideltone is the Saxon name, mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book, for the ancient village of Milton Keynes, around which the New City was built. Brewing is still taking place outside of MK while repairs continue at the Stonebridge brewery



site. Meanwhile, the brewery is planning to introduce Growler Swap, a scheme where customers will be able to swap their Eco Growlers (high quality reusable glass vessels) for refills at various locations around Milton Keynes. As mentioned on page 7, Bucks Star are also interested in acquiring the Suffolk Punch pub in an attempt to rescue it from oblivion.

Concrete Cow of Milton Keynes have brewed a collaborative beer with staff from local JD Wetherspoon branches, including those in MK. As yet unnamed, this cask conditioned beer should have turned up in your local 'Spoons over the Christmas and New Year period.

Concrete Cow, Hornes and Malting Box have got together with the newly opened Draft House pub in Central Milton Keynes to produce a house beer for the pub, MK Pale No.1 Citra. We'll let you guess what hops they used! A launch event was held at the Draft House on December 8th, with the first cask running dry before the end of the night.

Talking of **Hornes**, brewer Ryan Horne has now given up his day job and started brewing full time. A new seasonal beer has been produced for the winter months, Black Antler (4.8% ABV), which is a smooth, easy drinking, smoked porter brewed with Bamberg beech-smoked malt. The new beer featured alongside the rest of the Hornes range in a tap takeover/meet the brewer night hosted by Wetherspoons on Midsummer Boulevard, on December 7th. A seasonal brew for spring is already being planned, with French Aramis hops likely to feature in a light, grassy beer.



Leighton Buzzard Brewery have released two special edition Imperial Stouts aged in whisky casks, one of them

an Islay whisky.

Award-winning local cider press **Virtual Orchard** is moving out of our Branch area. Its new home is Wakefield Country Courtyard, off the A5 near Potterspurty, just over the Northamptonshire border. Their shop and bar moved up in October this year. The fruit press (and Wharf Distillery's still) will be moving there from their old location at Galleon Wharf, Old Wolverton, early in the New Year. We wish Laurence Conisbee every success in his new home and look forward to his continuing close association with our branch.

Our other award-winning local cider producer **Woughton Orchard** has regrettably ceased trading. The last batches of its produce were delivered to the Bell and Bear in Emberton and our own Concrete Pint Beer Festival in mid-October. Cider Maker Richard Smith hopes to be back "when the time is right". We hope that won't be too long. It's been a busy time at XT at Long Crendon. They have been celebrating their fifth anniversary, picking up awards for the XPA from SIBA and for the third year running 'Lest We Forget' has successfully raised funds for the British Legion poppy appeal.

As part of the five year birthday the brewery tasting room will be undergoing a makeover, enabling a wider range of beers to be offered for sampling in a more convivial environment.

XT launched a whole host of new Christmas and winter beers including:



Animal: Penguin – for bottle only this is a crisp pale ale, single hopped with New Zealand Motueka then lightly spiced to give a warming seasonal twist.



Animal: BAA-Humbug is a White Stout – taking the characteristics of fine stout – roasty coffee flavours, full body, hints of chocolate – but in a pale beer – a new unexpected twist on a traditional style.



Animal: Meow – The cat's whiskers: it's a Munich Dunkel - a German style Dark Bier: smooth malty flavour, toasted malt bread flavours and aromas from use of melanoidin-rich Munich malt. Smooth European Nobel Hops add the hop finish.



XT-Twenty Five – a super smooth rosy red beer for Christmas - the Alt Bier makes a welcome return for the season – slow brewed and with late hop additions.

Finally in Keg Only, **Animal: Squid Ink**

IPA 5.5% – A bold, brash, American style black IPA. Monster amounts of Chinook, Columbus and Summit hops from the US with Pacific Gem hops from New Zealand. The intense hop flavour is balanced by a malt base of no fewer than nine different malts including all-time favourites – Special B (caramel, raisin and plum flavours) and Carafa III (a super smooth roasted barley). “As dark as the deep ocean, plus a little twist with squid ink for even more black”

There is a very special Imperial Stout maturing slowly in XT's oak casks. This will be ready in the spring for a new range of bottle conditioned beers.

Pub News



The **Bull & Butcher** at Akeley is currently closed, awaiting a new licensee.

The **Biergarten** in Wolverton is presenting a Spring Beer Festival 2017 at York House, London

Road, Stony Stratford on Saturday the 25th March, running from 12 noon to 10pm. They hope to build on the success of the Oktoberfest 2016 held there which was visited by 600 people. Again, they will be laying on a German draught



bar and traditional German dress and music, craft beer from the UK and beyond, real ale on offer in the upstairs bar with at least three casks, and local street food in front of York House, including the return of Urban Grilla, which will be fondly remembered by attendees at the Concrete Pint Beer Festival.



We hear the tenancy at the Vale Brewery owned **Chequers** on Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, was up for sale.

Beer Moos would like to welcome the **Draft House**, 316 Midsummer Boulevard, CMK, as the newest pub to arrive in

our branch area. As reported in our previous issue, the London-based company's first venture outside of the capital has taken over the site formerly occupied by the Secklow Hundred. The new pub hosted several preview events before opening its doors to the public on 17th October. So far they have offered an impressive range of cask beer alongside a fascinating selection of craft keg and bottled beers. The atmosphere has been vibrant and youthful, particularly at weekends.

The **King's Head** in Buckingham, which was closed, has now re-opened as the **King's Head Coffee Bar**.



We also hear that the **Phoenix** in Steeple Claydon is currently closed. The licensee is believed to have moved on to the **Prince of Wales** in the same village.



The **Red House**, Newport Pagnell, whose new owners we reported in our last issue, sadly then closed, again, and was sold, again. It has been refurbished, again, and reopened in November as part of the Inn Britain group, which owns four other pubs, including the **Three Trees** on Buckingham Road, Bletchley,



which also offers real ale. The pub, and its carvery (soon to be extended), is open seven days a week, closing only from 15:00 to 17:00 Mondays to Fridays. Three real ales, Hobgoblin Gold, London Pride and Doom Bar, were on offer when we visited it. Beer Moos wishes manageress Bella and her team every success – this pleasant pub deserves to do better than it has done.

The saga around the future of Heelands pub the **Suffolk Punch** rumbles on. Earlier in 2016 MK Council decided not to list the pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), but this decision was called in for review when it was pointed out that potential conflicts of interest had not been disclosed by the decision maker. Local brewery Bucks Star have now stepped in to express an interest in running the pub and have submitted a business plan to demonstrate the pub could have a viable future, something the Council

had identified as a weakness in the community's ACV application. On Monday 19th December MK Council's review upheld the earlier decision not to grant ACV status – the pub is to be sold to the highest bidder. Currently this would be the developer who wants to pull the pub down and build 27 houses on the site. However, there would seem no reason why local residents' group Friends of the Suffolk Punch, which is supported by local Councillors Robin Bradburn and Robert Exon, could not put in a higher bid and save the pub, perhaps in conjunction with Bucks Star, if they can raise the funds.



The **Three Locks**, Stoke Hammond, being situated beside the Grand Union Canal, is very popular with dog walkers. Many a dog owner pops into the pub for a quick pint, so



innovative pub owner Mick Schwartz decided to take dog friendly to a new level and provide non-alcoholic bottled beer for dogs. Available in beef or chicken flavours, the beer

is a great success. The GBG-listed **Chester Arms** in Chicheley also offers the same doggie beer. Roll on Canine CAMRA!

The **Whale** in Buckingham is being taken over by the owners of the restaurant in the town's Nelson Street.



We understand the lease of the **Wheatsheaf**, Bow Brickhill, is for sale. The pub is still trading in the meantime.

Club News

The **Wolverton Sports Club** in Osbourne Street Wolverton held their 13th Tasting Weekend from Friday 2nd to



Sunday 4th December inclusive. This was a small beer and cider festival, offering about twenty local, regional and national cask ales on handpump and gravity dispense and, when our reporters visited on the Friday night, in fine condition. Beers came from as far away as Orkney, whose Red McGregor Scottish Ale was



popular at the bar. There were also six real ciders. Live music was provided on the Friday night by 70's tribute band Mungo Jungo and on Saturday evening by local folk singers Five Men Not Called Matt. Wolverton



SC hold these festivals twice a year – the next one is likely to be held in late March or early April and will be publicised on MK CAMRA's website.

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Supporting a Worthwhile Cause



On Saturday 24th September 2016, the Three Locks pub, just outside Stoke Hammond, was the starting point for a 5.5 mile or 11 mile (depending on whether you chose to return by bus, car or on foot) charity walk along the Grand Union Canal to the Grove Lock, just outside Leighton Buzzard. The walk was organised in aid of Brain Tumour Research.

up early especially for the occasion. Leighton Buzzard Brewing Company had brewed a commemorative beer called Hops For Hope and 25p from each pint sold was donated to the Brain Tumour Research charity.

Shortly before 10am, Paula, the organiser, called everyone outside for a briefing and group photo, before they all set off.

Jenny Ellway

The event was well attended and the fund raisers gathered from 9am to register and to have breakfast of tea, coffee and hot rolls in the bar of the Three Locks. Mick Schwartz, the pub's owner, and his staff opened



A Concrete Achievement:

23rd Branch Beer Festival Successful After All

It was the Beer Festival that nearly didn't happen. But in the end Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA's 23rd Concrete Pint Festival was a stunning success. Over 1600 people sampled over 90 ales, 21 ciders, 13 Belgian and other foreign beers and, a bold and successful innovation, several "keykeg" beers (which do not have keys and are not keg!). With the aid of generous sponsorship from pubs, drinkers and other local friends of real ale the festival more than covered its costs.

Yet only a few months before it had seemed we had no venue and the Festival was doomed. Thanks to help from Councillors Peter McDonald, David Lewis and the late Brian White, together with Kevin Monkton of Milton Keynes Development Partnership, we were able after all to use our previous venue, the Old Bus Station, right in the heart of our city opposite the central rail station.

So on the morning of Monday, October 17th an intrepid band of CAMRA volunteers started unloading casks of

ale and boxes of cider at the Bus Station. Barworx set up the new racking and cooling system which ensured that our ale was



kept in tip-top condition to the very last moment of the festival. The unfamiliar keykegs, looking more like atomic warheads than beer containers, arrived and were loaded into their exotic dispensing apparatus.

Next day the Cellar Crew vented, spiled and tapped the beer casks, whilst other volunteers set up the tombola, the stalls and seating and all the rest of the features of the festival.



On Wednesday 18th the final touches were added to the setup, whilst the Cellar Crew anxiously sampled the 90-odd ales (a hard job, but somebody has to do it!) to ensure they were fit to serve. At 4pm Branch Chairman David Martin declared the Festival open and personally served the first beer. For the first time anyone can remember, there was actually a queue waiting to get in as he did so.



And so we were off! CAMRA volunteers served, and in many cases if requested expertly advised, the throngs of patrons from behind the bar, whilst others ran the stalls, dispensed glasses and beer vouchers, managed staffing levels and performed the myriad tasks needed to keep the Festival ticking over. Festival Organiser Will Longmate and Finance Director John McLaughlin paced the quarterdeck, holding things on an even keel.



For some volunteers, working at the Festival was a family affair. Two bands of Beer Brothers – Clive and Garry Winder and Ian and Mike Piggott – were joined behind the bar by the Dad and Daughter team of Steve and Ashleigh Rogers. For all, it was interesting and fun, and



a way to make new friends sharing their passion for good beer and cider.

On Thursday night, the Festival was entertained by musicians TC3 and on Saturday evening by



2120's, with delicious fresh food available from Good Times Café, Urban Grilla and Saf's Kitchen.

The first beer to run out was Balamoon and the first cider Windmill Perry. Unprecedentedly, the ever-popular Tombola, run as always by Anne Clark and Fred Bakin, ran out of prizes and had to shut on the Friday night, having taken a record £500. Long-standing Branch stalwart Lyn Norman came all the way back from her new home in Cornwall to run the Games stall with her customary panache.



The imaginative Heriot-Watt Brewers' theme and the keykeg beers proved popular, as did the innovation of half-pint stemmed glasses. The great bulk of the beer and cider, and an unprecedented 81% of the bottled foreign beer, was sold, but the Festival did not run out of beer!

Drinkers voted Shadow of the Beast, from new Berkshire microbrewery Elusive, Beer of the Festival, with Fuller's Imperial Stout, making a rare appearance on draught,

runner up. Keykeg Beer of the Festival was Mills and Hills, a Scots/Dutch international collaboration by Fyne Ales and De Molen, with our own Concrete Cow's MK67 and Fierce's Cranachan Killer joint second. Local cidemaker Coach Builder's Cider With a Hint of Passion Fruit won Cider of the Festival, followed by Crone's Organic Cider Rum Cask from Norfolk. Heck's Blakeney Red Perry from Somerset led the perries.

19 new members, 14 of them local, were signed up to CAMRA during the Festival by Membership Secretary Ian Dolby.

As the gallant band of volunteers, assisted by Barworx, dismantled the Festival on the Sunday morning, they could look back on a job well done. However, the prospect looking forward is not so pleasing. MKDP are seeking a tenant for the Old Bus Station, and, depending on who they find, the venue may well not be available for our 24th Concrete Pint Festival. Which leaves the future of our Festival, in Milton Keynes' 50th Anniversary Year, very much up in the air. All offers of, and suggestions for, venues for 2017, in the event that we cannot stay at the Bus Station, most welcome!

But regardless of what happens next year, volunteers and drinkers alike will remember this year's Festival fondly. A job well done!

Steve Brady

Festival Staff Thanked, New Members Welcomed



There was a big turnout at the Branch Beer Festival Staff and New Members Social in Wetherspoon's, Central Milton Keynes on Thursday November 24th. Beer and buffet free to attendees laid on by 'Spoons Manager Alex Jonas ensured a convivial atmosphere as the Branch thanked the hard-working staff of our Festival and welcomed new members to our Campaign. Festival Organiser Will Longmate

paid tribute to the hard work of his staff and Membership Secretary Ian Dolby greeted some of the 14 local new members signed up at our Festival. A good time was had by all. Join, or if you have joined volunteer for our Festival, and you could be enjoying this next year!



My Eight Desert Island Beers



When asked to write this article I thought “what a very original idea: beer to go with puddings”. I must have been drinking at the time, as I quickly realised Desert Island beers were not wanted! Then I worried about how I’d pick beers that would survive for months or years in a warm climate, but earlier articles reassured me that I could take as read that I’d have a cool cellar for proper beer storage. I even think there must be regular deliveries of cask beer, to ensure I’ll be drinking beer in perfect condition during my sojourn – so I won’t be too “marooned”!

I then settled down to select my current eight favourite beers. But then I thought: if I’m cast away all alone on this island I should select not only beers that I would enjoy drinking, but also ones that will help me to remember what I had left behind: friends, family, enjoyable times, my whole life, in fact. So here is my list of the eight beers I’d take with me on my desert island and the memories they would invoke.

Watneys Pale Ale. Well, there’s a surprise! But it was the first beer I ever drank: at 15-16 years old we’d buy quart flagons of this to take to each other’s houses and drink in private, while playing cards, listening to music (the 1960s were great for that) and just “hanging out” (though we didn’t know it was called that back then)..... Although I didn’t enjoy the flavour, I just thought that was a rite of passage into adulthood; on more mature reflection, it was because the beer wasn’t very good! For my second beer I might suggest Party 4’s and Party 7’s - to remind me of parties during the 1960s - but one mention of Watneys is (more than!) enough.

Truman’s Bitter – The end of the ‘60s saw me commence my university days in Colchester. I met a bunch of new friends who enjoyed real ale and - despite the proximity of Adnams brewery (and Tolly Cobbold!) - we found a Trumans pub on our first night; soon we found another in Clacton that we regularly frequented. I must have drunk a lot of different beers while at Essex University (including – I remember – a trip to Stockport specifically to drink Boddingtons, etc) but Trumans gives me my sharpest memories of good times and good friends.

Youngs (“ordinary”) Bitter – After University I started “real” work, but weekends meant playing football Saturday and Sunday and staying with friends in Richmond, lubricated with plenty of “ordinary”; the Orange Tree was

our regular pub (and in mid-week, too) but we also visited many Youngs pubs throughout south west London.

A few years later I was initiated into the “Wandsworth One-Way” (WOW) by work friends – it was a pre-Christmas lunchtime pub crawl of 10 Youngs pubs in Wandsworth with a pint in each; since it started so long ago, it meant you started at noon and had to finish by 3.00 (plus “drinking-up time”). I still enjoy a pre-Christmas WOW, but it’s a lot more leisurely than 3 hours and we now seldom drink Youngs (despite it now being an MK “locale”!). But even now, when I do have an occasional pint of Ordinary, it has the power to evoke 45 years of memories.

Orval – Into the 1980s I was on the Social Club Committee at work (having joined to persuade them to introduce real ale into the on-site bar). Majestic did a deal with Swedish (state-owned) off-licenses to buy surplus stock, which allowed them to sell (mature) Orval at a very good price and our bar bought a lot of cases of it. This was my introduction to Belgian beers and I’ve never looked back. Indulging in the pleasures of Orval in our bar led two friends and I to plan a long weekend in Brussels to extend our repertoire – and 2016 saw us make our 28th consecutive annual visit there (and it was the first time we stayed in French-speaking Wallonia, in Mons). If ever I had to make a choice between never drinking real ale again or never drinking Belgian beers, it would be a very hard choice! You never forget your first love, do you? So Orval is the standard-bearer for all of my drinking of Belgian beers.

Crouch Vale Brewer’s Gold – At one time, our workplace Social Club Bar was the only place in central London you could buy Crouch Gold and we certainly served a mean pint of it! This had become my favourite beer long before it won the Great British Beer Festival’s Champion Beer two years running. The Bar was the Social Club and vice-versa and I was on the Committee for around 25 years. Crouch Gold always reminds me of the Club, how well it did to promote real ale, Belgian beer and responsible drinking to lots of newcomers (even converting a few lager louts!). It also brings back many happy memories of evenings in the bar and of the many good friends and colleagues I socialised with there over the years.

Drei Fontein Oude Gueuze – Gueuze is a beer I don’t really like, so why is it here? Because the close friends and comrades of my regular Belgian visits love gueuze, while Drei Fontein is one that’s not too bad! This beer therefore evokes those good friends (and one now, sadly,

dead) who drank it with me, and some of the special places where we drank it: in Beersel next to the brewery and at a very special bar, 'In de Verzekering tegen de Grote Dorst'. That translates as "the Insurance against Great Thirst" – it's a traditional café and the only one remaining at the village of Eizeringen (a few miles west of Brussels) and, according to Tim Webb - "stocks perhaps the best range of lambic beers on the planet"; but it only opens on Sundays (and Church holidays) and then only for three and a half hours.

Fuller's London Pride – This is the beer I've drunk most of over the last couple of decades, mostly at the Crown & Sceptre in Shepherds Bush. I lived in the Bush for 17 years and it was my local and it is (and has always been) a "QPR pub", so I still go there before and after matches at the heaven (and hell!) that is Loftus Road. I also play darts in a league and our home pub (in Borough, near London Bridge) is also a Fuller's pub, so I lubricate my throws there with Pride. I'm also proud to be a Londoner, born and bred until I arrived in MK two years ago, so this

beer reminds me of my home town, my football team, the friends who accompany me to football (and argue with me about it afterwards) and also those with whom I play darts – my regular sporting activity!

Houblon Chouffe – currently my favourite Belgian beer. It's an IPA with three types of hops (I'm a big fan of hoppy beers) and an unfiltered beer which is refermented in both the barrel and the bottle, so it is – in practice – a real ale. I enjoy drinking this at home, so it will remind me of my family and my home in Two Mile Ash – it will remind me what I am missing most on on my desert island!

Bucks Star No 1 – This might look like a ninth beer, but it's not, as Watneys Pale Ale is no longer available to transport to my desert island (and I wouldn't really want to drink it, anyway). I can therefore complete a full circle with this beer – as it's also a pale ale – which would remind me of my move to Milton Keynes two years ago and the friends I've made in the local CAMRA branch, as well as visiting the Bucks Star brewery in Stonebridge for Franzi's MK Beer nights.

CAMRA Helps Keep Local Pubs Open



Local pubs are closing at the rate of 27 pubs EVERY WEEK! Your local could be next. But CAMRA fights to defend every pub, not just ones selling good real ale. Even a bad pub can become a good pub. If it closes, it can't.

The core of CAMRA's fight to keep our pubs open is registering pubs as Assets of Community Value (ACV's). Becoming an ACV on its own doesn't guarantee a pub will stay open, but it does make it harder to close it.

If an ACV-registered pub is put up for sale then a community group is entitled to submit a bid, and a six-month moratorium kicks in giving the group time to raise the necessary funds. Registering a pub as an ACV also means a "developer" or whoever has to get



planning permission to turn the pub into a shop or an estate agent's or simply pull it down. Without an ACV, they can just go ahead and do it as they like.



CAMRA encourages and helps local communities to get their pubs granted ACV status by local Councils, and supports and helps them in campaigning

to keep their locals open. Lots of local pubs have been saved this way.

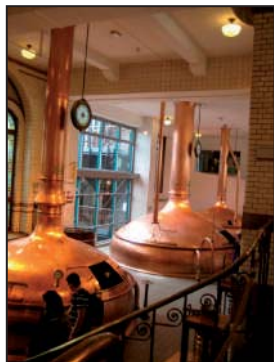
Your local could be saved too. Join CAMRA and help it happen.

Closed pub pics: front page, from top to bottom, Bull Fenny Stratford, Fox and Hounds, Deanshanger, Royal Engineer, Wolverton; this page top left County Arms New Bradwell, bottom left Green Man, Newport Pagnell, top right Foundry Arms, Fenny Stratford, bottom right Bridge Inn, Fenny Stratford

Taking a Seidl From Amsterdam to Brussels

Last year my husband Alan and I spent a week on a beer tasting river cruise from Amsterdam to Brussels.

While we were in Amsterdam, we were taken to the Heineken Experience. The beginning of the tour leads through an interesting museum explaining the history of the Heineken family and how the brewery developed.



Part of the tour is through the original brewery with its large copper vessels and from here you get a view of the old stables, complete with dray horses. After this, the tour is largely about Heineken's sports sponsorship and combines interactive simulation with bright flashing lights and loud music. I was quite relieved

when we emerged to the relative calm of Amsterdam's busy traffic.

That evening, we were joined on board by our beer expert, Conrad Seidl, a beer writer from Vienna. He was distinctive in his lederhosen and leather hat.



That night we sailed to Rotterdam, arriving early morning and our ship gave us a tour of Rotterdam's large harbour, with a commentary from the Cruise Director. Alan and I went up on deck and watched the commuters in cars and on bicycles making their way across the bridge above, with cloudless sunshine overhead. This day provided the best weather of the whole week, which was most fortunate as that day we were going to Keukenhof, a park that is only open for six weeks of the year when the tulips are in bloom. It is the showcase for all the tulip producers and 7 million flower bulbs are planted in its 70 acres of parkland, sculptured gardens and greenhouses. I had no idea that there were so many varieties of tulip and some

defied our preconception of what a tulip looks like. As we spent four hours at Keukenhof, it was a blessing that it didn't rain. When we returned to the ship, Alan and I took a stroll to the nearby Oude Haven, or old harbour. The buildings surrounding it are all cafes, restaurants and bars nowadays and it seemed the perfect place to enjoy a beer in the warm late afternoon sunshine. More by luck than by design, the bar we chose was the local outlet for beers from the Ramses microbrewery. The brewery produces about 20 beers, some seasonal, but all the beers are single hopped giving each beer a unique character and flavour.



The next morning, it poured with rain for our visit to Kinderdijk to see the old and the new methods of water management and flood prevention: the historic windmills and the modern pumping stations with their Archimedes screws. That afternoon, on board ship, Conrad Seidl gave the first of his two tutored tastings on the diversity of beer flavours. This tasting focussed on sweetness. His talk explained the brewing process and how the malt produces fermentable sugars that are converted to alcohol. Some beers retain residual sugar and we compared five beers: Malheur 12, Boelens Waase Wolf, St Bernadus Prior 8, Gulden Draak and Mort Subite Kriek, each demonstrating a degree of sweetness.

The following morning, although bright and sunny, there was a cold blustery wind. Having left home during that rare warm spell we enjoyed in early April, I hadn't packed sufficient warm clothing, so Alan and I skipped the visit to the Delta Works, a six mile long storm flood barrier built after a flood in 1953 that had killed 1800 people. In the afternoon, we joined the walking tour of Middleburg as the town would be less exposed to the elements than the Delta Works. It was still cold and we had a few light showers during the walk. With free time afterwards, Alan and I decided to explore a bar called Desafinado that we'd passed as we followed our guide. Lots of different beers to choose from and a crowd of colourful characters, some we assumed to be in fancy dress, made it quite

an entertaining place to be. Jazz classics played in the background while we enjoyed two beers from the local Kees Brewery.

Back on board ship, we had our second tutored tasting, this time educating our taste buds on the difference between bitterness and sourness. The first beer was Mikkeller American Dream. I have had some sour beers in my time, but this was like sucking lemons. I think it made everyone in the room wince, except Conrad Seidl, of course. This was followed (with great relief!) by Orval, Westmalle Tripel, St Martins Tripel and Boon Marriage Parfait. Westmalle Tripel has been a favourite of mine for many years, but I was interested to learn that in the beer world it is regarded as the definitive tripel.

The next morning, we arrived in Ghent. The weather was still cold and wet and, unfortunately, it was Sunday, so everywhere was closed. We had a walking tour. A lot of the people on this cruise were from the USA, Australia and New Zealand and were disappointed that they couldn't look inside the cathedral while mass was taking place. Again, we had free time at the end of the tour and there appeared to be only one café open near the cathedral. We ducked in there for a warming coffee and it soon became full. We returned to the ship for lunch and in the afternoon, the sun came out. There was an hourly shuttle bus running between the ship and the city centre, so we ventured back and enjoyed a pleasant stroll. We bought a couple of bottled beers to take back to the ship to enjoy later. We just missed the bus back and had an hour to wait, so we decided to try out a bar that Conrad had recommended, le Chat Noir. It had become warm enough to sit outside and enjoy a Kwak.



That evening we had a beer pairing dinner with Kwak, Duchess de Bourgogne, De Dolle Oerbier and T'ijl Struis, each accompanying a different course. The beers were offered as tasters, not full glasses, so after dinner, we returned to our cabin, sat by the window and drank the bottles of Piraat and Gulden Draak that we'd purchased that afternoon. The waterway towards Antwerp, our next port of call, is very wide and watching the lights of other ships in the distance made it feel more like being at sea than on an inland waterway.

The next morning, we took the walking tour of Antwerp, which included a visit to a bar on the Grote Markt to sample a glass of the local beer, De Koninck. In the afternoon, we visited the Pakhuis Brewery. This is a microbrewery specialising in traditional brewing methods. Their three different beers are unfiltered and are only available on draught at the brewery. The bottled beers, all of which undergo second fermentation in the bottle, are more widely available. I was interested to hear that after the brewing process is complete, the draught beers are stored in what the brewer described as an inflatable bag inside a vessel that holds 1000 litres. The gas pressure used to dispense the beer doesn't come into contact with the beer. It sounds like a giant key keg, but just the bag is discarded when empty. The beers are lower ABV than most Belgian beers: the Blond is 5.1%, the Brown 5.5% and only the tripel, Den Bangelijke, approaches the usual Belgian beer strength at 8.4%. For lovers of real ale, it was a fitting end to the week to drink unfiltered draught beer with no artificially added carbon dioxide.

That evening, we sailed towards the outskirts of Brussels. We packed our suitcases ready for the next morning's coach ride to Brussels Midi station and the Eurostar home.

Jenny Ellway

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Good Beer Guide 2017

We made a significant change to the way that pubs were selected for the Good Beer Guide this year. Beer scores have played a part in the selection for many years, but in previous years they have only been used to draw up a short list. The pubs with the highest average scores for a 12 month period were then visited by the Pubs Officer and a few other branch members who evaluated the beer quality. The problem with this process was that the decision rested on the condition of the beer on a particular afternoon or evening.

Because the pubs that go into the Guide should serve beer in excellent condition all year round, the decision was taken to submit the pubs with the highest mean average scores for that 12 month period without further intervention from Branch members. We set a minimum number of scores that a pub should have to qualify and a minimum number of different members scoring. This means that a single score of 5 or several high scores but awarded by just one member would not give a pub a place in the Guide. We wanted to, as far as possible, eliminate any bias and show that the quality of the beer had been maintained throughout the year.

Any CAMRA member from anywhere in the country who drinks the real ale in any of the pubs in our Branch can submit a score reflecting the condition of the beers served and all these scores count towards the final average. (Please see Have You Scored Yet? on page 4 for the beer scores scale.)

The result was that six pubs, the Victoria Inn, Bradwell Village; the Chester Arms, Chicheley; the Cock Inn,

Hanslope; the Wheatsheaf, Maids Moreton; the Three Locks, Stoke Hammond; the George Inn, Winslow made a debut entry in this year's Guide. We congratulate them and the seven pubs who retained their place from last year for the excellent quality of their real ales.



Bedford Beer Festival 2016



We at Milton Keynes CAMRA are good friends with Bedford festival. It's held a fortnight before ours, we advertise it in Beer Moos, and North Beds branch

advertises ours in their magazine The Firkin. This year, as always, they put on a great choice of about 180 ales (I lost count!) and ciders, and a truly superb foreign beers bar which your correspondent sampled immoderately!

Bedford festival wasn't of course *quite* as good as our own dear Concrete Pint, but was still very well worth the several visits needed to do it justice. Luckily, public transport between Bedford and Milton Keynes is excellent. And we can only envy their superb location in the Corn Exchange. If only some kindly giant would pick that up and set it down here in Milton Keynes – what headaches it would save us! Ah well, one can dream....

Jim Scott



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