



beer moos

Summer 2015

Issue Thirty Four

OUR OWN TRUMPET! (BEER MOOS WINS AN AWARD!)



We're a modest bunch here at Beer Moos; we're out to blow the trumpet for real ale, not for ourselves. So no-one was more gobsmacked than your editor when, at CAMRA's recent National AGM in Nottingham, he was called forward to receive, on behalf of Beer Moos, the Most Improved CAMRA Branch Magazine award for 2014. Here I am collecting the certificate from CAMRA national director Jackie Parker.

Credit for the award goes of course to all who write and supply news, copy, and photos to our magazine, and not just to its editor. Credit too to our publisher and our setter, Neil and Matthew Richards of Matelot

Marketing Ltd, whose skills make Beer Moos such a professional-looking product. We all hope that our efforts have pleased not just CAMRA's judges, but you, our readers, for it's for you that Beer Moos exists.

Of course we think we were always so good we didn't actually need improving but as I said, we are a modest bunch here at Beer Moos.....!!

You can read every issue of Beer Moos in PDF format on our website.

www.mkcamra.org.uk



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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



The Cannon *Free House*

A completely independent
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Red House Quiz Team's Triumph



The pub quiz team from the Red House in Newport Pagnell laid waste to all challengers to walk off with the George Poulton Memorial Cup - the prize for winning the MK Quiz League knockout competition. In a tense final held at the Herald Sporting Club, the team, known as Simply Red, annihilated The Foxes, from the Fox and Hounds in Stony

Stratford with a massive 10 point margin of victory. In previous rounds they managed to see off competition from the Maltsters Arms and Swan Hotel in Fenny Stratford, and a team from the Herald Sporting Club.

Ian Dolby



Visit to Hanslope Working Men's Club Beer Festival

The Club, Hanslope (formerly the Working Mens' Club) held its first beer festival in early April and CAMRA was invited. Our regional director Nick Boley came



along, and the event was most enjoyable. The beer list was small but well thought-out, and ideal for a first festival, and the Langton beers on handpump at the bar made a welcome addition, as ales from this Leicestershire micro are not widely available in our area.

All in all a most enjoyable experience, and one which we hope Hanslope Club will be repeating.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Beer Moos will be published on: August 10th. We must have your stories, news and advertisements by: July 31st. Late copy cannot be guaranteed entry.

Committee Branch Contacts

Chairman: *David Martin* - 07889 209251

chairman@mkcamra.org.uk

Vice-Chairman: *Alan Fursdon*

vice.chairman@mkcamra.org.uk

Branch Secretary: *Steve Brady*

secretary@mkcamra.org.uk

Branch Contact: *David Martin* - 07889 209251

contact@mkcamra.org.uk

Treasurer: *Dave Givens*

treasurer@mkcamra.org.uk

Membership Secretary: *Ian Dolby*

membership@mkcamra.org.uk

Branch Cider Representative: *Anne Clark*

cider@mkcamra.org.uk

Social Secretary: *Ian Dolby*

social@mkcamra.org.uk

Beer Moos Editor: *Jim Scott* - 07952 337526

editor@mkcamra.org.uk

Branch Young Persons Coordinator: *Ashleigh Rogers*

ypc@mkcamra.org.uk

PR Officer: *Vacant*

pr@mkcamra.org.uk

Pubs Officer: *Lyn Norman*

pubs@mkcamra.org.uk

Pubs Preservation Officer: *Lyn Norman*

pubs.preservation@mkcamra.org.uk

Public Transport Officer: *Jenny Ellway*

transport@mkcamra.org.uk

Database Co-ordinator: *Jenny Ellway*

database@mkcamra.org.uk

Webmaster: *Phil Swinbank*

webmaster@mkcamra.org.uk

Beer Festival Organiser: *Jon Scudamore*

festival@mkcamra.org.uk

Clubs Officer: *Jason Jarratt*

clubs@mkcamra.org.uk

LocAle Coordinator: *Jason Jarratt*

locale@mkcamra.org.uk

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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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Buckingham's Mitre is our 2015 Pub of the Year



Every year Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA, like many other branches, picks out one pub in its area to be honoured as branch Pub of the Year. This year the

honour fell to the 400-year-old Mitre in Buckingham, and on April 14th branch members went there to present landlords Keith and Jane Templeman with their well-earned Pub of the Year Certificate.

The criteria on the basis of which the branch annually selects its Pub of the Year naturally include the quality of its beers and ciders. But we go beyond that to consider the atmosphere and facilities of the pub, its contribution to the local community of which it should be a central part, its sympathy to and furthering of CAMRA aims, and the warmth of welcome it extends to diverse drinkers visiting it. On that basis, at its February meeting our branch deemed the Mitre a worthy winner, in the face of some very tough competition from other excellent local hosteleries.

Branch Chairman David Martin and our Pubs Officer

Lyn Norman presented Keith and Jane with their PotY certificate in front of a packed audience of their regulars and our members. Receiving the award, Keith and Jane thanked their team of bar staff and their regulars as well as our branch.

CAMRA members and locals then proceeded to enjoy a jovial and convivial evening refreshed by the excellent – and ever-changing – array of fine ales and cider our 2015 Pub of the Year had to offer. You are heartily recommended to do the



same – the Mitre is at 2 Mitre Street (it's not clear which was named after which!) about 15 minutes' walk from Buckingham town centre in a south easterly direction following Castle, Nelson, and then Hunter Streets. (For Google Streetwalkers the postcode is MK18 1DW). You'll be made most welcome, and enjoy some excellent beers and ciders in a comfortable and friendly old pub. If you're tall though, be aware of the low lintel on the entrance door – it really is a case of 'Duck or Grouse!'

Steve Brady

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 on 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	<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>

Pub News

NEWS NORTH

Navigation, Cosgrove reopens on June 5th following a £1.5 million refurbishment by Oakman Inns and Greene King.

News East

Bell and Bear, Emberton has won the award of joint Cider Pub of the Year 2015 in our branch, sharing the honour with the Lamb in Stoke Goldington.

They were filming a news feature on the EU's tax proposals affecting British small cider producers. Richard Smith (Woughton Orchard) was interviewed along with the pub's staff. See also Cider News on p15.

The pub plans to run its first beer festival over the late May bank holiday weekend, Fri 22nd to Sun 24th May. Further details at www.bellandbear.net. In addition to its real ale and cider range, the pub now sells a selection of craft keg and bottled beers including Concrete Cow's wheat beer Dirty Cow.

Chester Arms, Chicheley looked smart and repainted when our snoop drove past in April but no indication of the pub's future was available.

Cowpers Oak, Weston Underwood

has its fourth Summer Festival on Sat 25th and Sun 26th July. As we go to press tickets are still available at £10, valid for the whole weekend. As the real ale has been the only thing not to sell out at previous events, they will be offering a wider choice of drinks products this year, including some local real ales.



Lamb, Stoke Goldington is joint winner of our branch's Cider Pub of the Year Award 2015, sharing the palm with the Bell and Bear at Emberton.

Swan Inn & Bistro, Olney. Six beers continue to grace the bar, including the house beer from Hart Family Brewers, Local Pale Ale. When our spy called, rebranded Greene King IPA, Abbot, and Down the Dragon also featured, plus the excellent Herbalist Hoppy Saison, a collaboration from Adnams and Magic Rock. If you've never had a beer with Pineapple Weed in it (one of the four herbs used), our spy urges you to 'Seek it out! I'm sure it's the huge amounts of hops that actually make it taste so good.'

The Swan offers a discount on beer to CAMRA members on presentation of up-to-date membership card.

Two Brewers, Olney now stocks GFL Gluten Free Lager in bottles, brewed in Yorkshire by Nick Stafford's Hambleton Ales, 5.2% ABV.

News South

Betsy Wynne, Swanbourne will hold its second beer festival Sat 23rd and Sun 24th May. Local beer and cider, BBQ and pig roast, live music.

News West

George, Winslow which reopened on April 10th, is now owned by Vale Brewery of Brill, and managed by Mark Williamson. Beer Moos welcomes a further Vale house in our branch area and wishes Mark a successful and prosperous tenure. See also Buszwords on p8.



Mitre, Buckingham is our branch's Pub of the Year for 2015. See separate article on p4.



Wheatsheaf, Maids Moreton Beer Moos welcomes Brad and Jo as guvnors of this wonderfully unspoilt village pub.

News Central

Eight Belles, Bletchley offers a Pie, Mash, Liquor and Ale festival on May 23rd/24th. Ten ales from around the world are promised.

Ship Ashore, Willen Beer Moos welcomes management team Ant Surtees and Carl Hanley to our 2014 Pub of the Year, and wishes them a prosperous tenure. See also article on p7.

Suffolk Punch, Heelands is currently listed on a commercial property agent's website thus: 'Potential for a range of uses including residential (subject to planning), Freehold and vacant possession available.' Its future as a pub looks bleak in the extreme.

Swan Inn, MK Village / Middleton. Swan Fest 2015, Sat 25th and Sun 26th July. Beer & music festival - free entry.

Brewery News

Amphill Brewery has closed. From their Facebook page dated 14th April - 'it is with regret that due to a change in circumstances Amphill Brewery is closing. It has been exciting to resurrect the brewing tradition in Amphill and we would like to thank you all for your interest and support. The brewery is up for sale - if anyone has any interest, please contact us to discuss further.'

Concrete Cow Brewer/proprietor Dan Bonner writes: 'Very exciting times ahead. The canning machine arrives later this month (May) and soon after that cans will be filled and ready for drinking. The brewery is working closely with local FTSE 250 firm Rexam who will be manufacturing the cans at Milton Keynes and who have designed the artwork, to include an iconic MK skyline. A new member of staff is being hired to help with the canning process and the long overdue website reinstatement is due very shortly with a new updated look and feel. A brewery membership scheme is planned with member discounts and merchandise such as t-shirts, hoodies and can coolers etc.'



Wetherspoons has just confirmed the installation of MK IPA in keg on a new T-Bar font at Midsummer Boulevard ... a great (and only) way to enjoy the new beer in draught form. MK IPA will be a true craft beer inspired by the need to face off a mass produced world ... unfiltered, unpasteurised, naturally carbonated and brewed with 100 per cent fresh-from-the box Citra, Simcoe and Columbus hops. Beer miles are just 2+1/2 ...fermenter to font. Is this the lowest beer miles from a micro to a JDW pub?

Meanwhile, Dirty Cow wheat beer keeps flying from the keg at the Bell and Bear in Emberton who will also be stocking cans of MK IPA.

Regular cask ales are also going well.

Follow the progress on Twitter [@concretecowbeer](#) and the website www.concretecowbrewery.co.uk to find out when and where the first cans are available'

XT Brewery The annual special beer for 2015 is the 'Fifteen' – this is an English IPA to celebrate the English hop growers who have been working hard to develop new varieties to compete with the strong aromatic and fruity New World hops. XT have been trialling some of

these and decided it was time to release a new beer incorporating these newbies.

The Animal range has been joined by two new beers for the spring:

Big Bang 4.6% - Exploding out of the eternal darkness of roasted rye - a dark amber ale with coffee-toast flavours, and slowly evolving into an Anglo-American hop finish.

Woosh! 4.6% - An amber beer layered with light biscuity Vienna malts and a rich fruity filling of new world of hops.

Milton Keynes is set to get **Two New Microbreweries** during the second half of 2015. **Bucks Star** will be based at Stonebridge, near Wolverton, where extensive pilot brews have refined the recipe for their opening beer, No. 1. Further south, in Bow Brickhill, **Hornes Brewery** are perfecting a small range of beers not far from the Wheatsheaf pub. If all goes to plan, both breweries should have ale available for the autumn. Contact info@bucksstar.co.uk and info@hornesbrewery.co.uk for further information.



National AGM in Nottingham

A group of our members attended national CAMRA's annual general meeting and members' weekend, held this year in Nottingham. As ever there was lively debate, and the chance to meet – and quiz – the 'top brass', meet old friends and make new ones, and enjoy visits to breweries, cider makers, and local pubs (excellent for the most part), and drain the members' bar dry!



Next year's AGM will be in Liverpool and all CAMRA members are invited to attend. It is good fun as well as the serious business of setting CAMRA's policy for the following year.

Cider Pubs of the Year 2015

Like all CAMRA branches, ours chooses a pub of the year and also a cider pub of the year from the pubs in our area. This year's award goes jointly to the Bell and Bear at Emberton and the Lamb in Stoke Goldington.



Lamb, Stoke Goldington

On May 30th we shall make the cider presentations to John and Sophie Andriessen at the Bell and Bear, and to Steve and Rachel Porritt

at the Lamb, and all are welcome to come along. As these are village pubs we are making the presentations on a Saturday during the daytime when buses will be running there and back.

We hope to assemble at the Lamb at around 12.30 and go on to the Bell and Bear by 4pm. Stoke Goldington is served by bus nr 37 and Emberton by nr 21; the two routes intersect at Newport Pagnell. For times visit www.mkweb.co.uk but service 21 buses back to MK leave Emberton at 52 past each hour till 19.52 after which it's taxi, bike, or a long long walk....



Bell and Bear, Emberton

Jim Scott

New Crew at the Ship-Ashore

Beer Moos met the new incumbents at the Ship Ashore, Willen at the beginning of March. The management team is Ant Surtees and assistant Carl Hanley.

Ant worked previously at the Nut and Squirrel and the Giffard Park, as well as doing a short stint at the Clocktower in Emerson Valley. He's brought eight members of staff with him from pubs he's worked at before.

He claims a real passion for real ale, and was awarded Pub of the Year by Leicester branch for the Bakers Arms in Blaby when he worked there. As we go to press, Ant has just installed an impressive new Caskwidge vertical cask dispense system, which he is very proud of and was keen to show us. It allows him to keep more ale in the cellar, start serving it sooner and minimise wastage.

The Ship team aim to keep six ales on most of the time, with anchors of Purity UBU and Brakspears Bitter, as is usual for M&B pubs.

Fifteen years in the licensed trade, Ant started his career as a chef. His claim to fame in that role is that he once, ('accidentally' he says!) cooked for the Queen.



Manager Ant Surtees (left) and barman Jay Richens

Buszwords

The recent Milton Keynes Council budget had proposed to cut, amongst other amenities, funding for buses. I attended the Council meeting where the budget was discussed. The public gallery was packed and several members of the public spoke in order to influence the Councillors to oppose the budget as it stood. The number 37, which is a lifeline for people without a car living in the villages it serves, had the most public support. The route goes from Wolverton to Newport Pagnell then through the villages of Lathbury, Gayhurst, Stoke Goldington, Ravenstone and Weston Underwood on its way to Olney. There are two superb pubs on its route: the Lamb at Stoke Goldington, joint winner of the Branch Cider Pub of the Year, and the Cowper's Oak in Weston Underwood.

My particular interest in the budget meeting was that, during 2014, I had joined a group who were campaigning to save the number 18 route. We created a four page A5 leaflet that included the bus timetable on the reverse and a schematic map on the centre pages that highlighted places of interest along the route, including the pubs. Everyone in the group undertook to distribute the leaflet to houses close to the bus stops to promote awareness and increase public usage of this particular service. The number 18 runs from Bletchley Bus Station to CMK shopping centre. Leaving the bus station, it goes to Fenny Stratford. There is a stop in Aylesbury Street where you find the Bull and Butcher and the Maltsters Arms. A short walk towards the double roundabout in Watling Street gives you the choice of the Swan Hotel and the Chequers. The next stop at Staplehall Road is close to Lock View Lane that leads to the Red Lion, a canalside pub. The route carries on to Simpson where there are two bus stops equidistant from the Plough whose rear garden slopes up to the canal tow path. Further on the bus stops near to the Olde Swan at Woughton on the Green. In Woolstone, the bus stops at Marshalls Lane and it is just a few yards across the grass to the Cross Keys and then the bus stops almost outside the door of the Barge Inn. From there it continues to CMK shopping centre.

At time of writing, neither bus route is thought to be under threat. Sadly, neither of these buses operates an evening or Sunday service, but a pub lunch on a weekday or Saturday in one of the hostelries that serve food is an option if you don't want to drive. Details of opening hours and meal times are given on whatpub.com and there is a link to the pub's own website, if available.

There is no "Branching Out" in this issue as the pub I wanted to feature is still being refurbished. Watch this space in Issue Number 35. Instead, I am highlighting

a newly refurbished and newly re-opened pub in our own Branch, the George Inn at Winslow.

This listed building, recently acquired by the Vale Brewery, opened in April after complete refurbishment. As you enter, the bar is to your left and displays eight hand pumps. Bottles of wine and spirits stand neatly on shelves behind the bar. There are wooden tables and chairs and leather bench seats, including a curved, red leather bench seat in the bay window to the front and there is an open fire on the wall opposite the bar. In the far corner is a passage to another room furnished in similar style with an impressive L shaped red leather bench seat in one corner. A wood burning stove stands in the fire place. The décor is a skilful combination of modern and retro and the pub has a welcoming relaxed atmosphere.

The big attraction, though, is the range of beers. To the left of the pillar on the bar, the four hand pumps serve Vale beers: Best and Red Kite are on regularly alongside two others from the Vale range. To the right of the pillar, the hand pumps dispense three guest ales and one real cider. The day I visited, the guest beers were Mighty Oak *Cellophane Flowers*, Scarborough Brewery *Stout* and Burton Bridge *Spring Ale* and the cider was *Rosie's Pig*. There is also a large selection of bottled beers from Belgium, USA and Germany. Wines and single malt whiskies also feature.

There are plans to turn the first floor into a restaurant, but this is for the future. Although there is no cooked food at the moment, a selection of pork pies is always available.

The Arriva X60 runs hourly from CMK, Buckingham and Padbury until early evening, Monday to Saturday, but be sure to check the time of the last bus back. The Z&S 50 has two buses around lunchtime from Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Newton Longville, Drayton Parslow, Mursley, Swanbourne and the Horwoods. There is no Sunday Service on either route.



Jenny Ellway

'County' Pub of the Year all very PotY!

Not only do CAMRA branches each nominate a pub of the year (PotY), but they take part in judging the pubs chosen by other branches in their county to select a county pub of the year. In CAMRA-land counties are grouped into regions, so county choices become candidates for the regional and later national Pub of the Year.

An anomaly in the drawing of our region's boundary means that some Hertfordshire pubs are included in the Buckinghamshire county contest (hence the 'scare quotes' in the title of this article), so late in April a minibus-load of branch members set off to assess the Rising Sun at Berkhamsted, which is in Herts, and the Royal Standard at Wooburn Green, near Beaconsfield – definitely in Bucks!

Both are splendid pubs. The Royal Standard is in a tranquil rural setting; the Rising Sun fronts on to a busy lock on the Grand Union canal. Like our branch's own

PotY, the Mitre in Buckingham, which we're not allowed to judge for the county contest, all are well worth visiting, and the Rising Sun is very easily reached by train from Milton Keynes.

Once they've been chosen, Beer Moos will be announcing the county, regional, and national Pub of the Year for 2015.

PS. Our regional director Nick Boley comments: 'Strictly speaking it is NOT the county PotY - it is the semi final winner for the three branches wholly or mainly in Buckinghamshire.'

So there! Now you know!



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Wooburn Green*



Rising Sun, Berkhamsted

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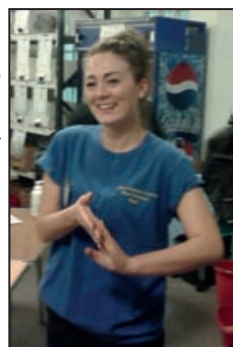
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01234 711565

Young Members Have a Drink with Ashleigh!

Ashleigh Rogers, Milton Keynes & North Bucks CAMRA's Young Members' Officer, would like to invite all local CAMRA members under 30, and their friends, to have a drink with her at the Moon Under Water, in Xscape, Central Milton Keynes, on Saturday 20th June from 8pm onwards. This is a Wetherspoon's pub with lots of real ale and cider and you can get cheap drinks with your CAMRA 'Spoons vouchers!



This is Ashleigh's first Young Members' Social and she would love to see you all there! You can contact her at ygc@mkcamra.co.uk for more info.

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Tenth Annual MK Cycle Pub Crawl

Some numbers. This year's crawl was the tenth, around nine pubs, over a distance of thirteen miles. 43 riders set out from the Prince Albert in Bradwell and most made it to the finish at J D Wetherspoons on Midsummer Boulevard.

Let the pictures tell the story!



Is Your Local Under Threat?

If you suspect your pub may be under threat of closure or change of use, then CAMRA can help with getting the pub listed as an ASSET of COMMUNITY VALUE (ACV). A recent change in the law affords pubs nominated or successfully listed extra protection.

An ACV is subject to a full planning application if the owners wish to demolish or convert the pub for an

alternative use. Nominating your local pub provides a vital opportunity for local people to comment on planning applications which determine the loss of a local pub.

So be vigilant and look for signs that your local may be heading for trouble. For more information contact our pubs officer on pubs@mkcamra.org.uk or any branch committee member.

Bibulous Belgian Beer Trip

Local CAMRA stalwart Doug Dillow has been organising an annual Beer Trip to Belgium for some years now, but this is the first year I have taken part. So I was uncertain what to expect when, along with new recruit Steve Rogers, father of our Young Members' Officer Ashleigh, I boarded the coach promptly, as much stressed by Doug, at 7:30am on Thursday 9th April at MK Coachway. In the event a splendid jaunt awaited us. The first of many such in my case, I hope.

Traversing border bureaucracy and enjoying the less than exciting views afforded by the Channel Tunnel crossing we were in France by midday. We stopped near the tunnel for a cup of truly vile mechanically-made chemical *café au lait* which was a disgrace to that country's cuisine before setting off to cleanse our tastebuds with our first mouthful of Belgian beer.

Crossing the Franco-Belgian border several times, early afternoon found us at the *Brouwerij St Bernardus*, in open countryside at Watou near Poperinge. After a tour of the brewery confirmed that the same beer-making process is followed on their side of the Channel as on ours, it was upstairs to the fine brewery tap to enjoy our first taste of the trip. We were not disappointed with the Tripel set before us, nor with the range of beers in the pack each of us bore off as spoils, the price included in our tour.



We sample the beers of St Bernardus

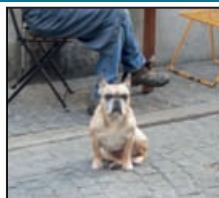


The spoils of our first brewery visit

Thence to the basic but comfortable and strategically sited Ibis Hotel Antwerp Centrum to unpack and prepare for our first foray into this historic city. The hotel indeed being in the city Centrum it was a short walk to a fine old "brown café" (aka traditional local pub) the *Oud Arsenaal* to open the batting for the evening. Various of our group then fanned out across the city to sample its many hostelries, guided by the excellent good beer guidesheets provided in the welcome pack handed us when first we boarded the coach.

We first ventured to *Billie's Bier Kafetaria*, where a superb range of local delights was on offer, under the watchful

eye of the eponymous Billie, a French bulldog who clearly takes his responsibilities as landlord seriously. Thence to the Great White Eagle, *De Groot Witte Arend*, to relax over a nightcap to the strains of classical music. A highlight was the Hopus, which is not only, as usual, poured from the bottle into the normal Belgian beer-specific branded and individually styled glass, but comes with a likewise-branded shot glass. Into this is decanted the yeasty bit at the bottom, to be knocked back after enjoying the beer by those desirous of maintaining the regular functioning of their internal apparatus. And so to bed...



Proud landlord Billy outside his Bar in Antwerp



Enjoying fine beer in fine weather at the Kasteel Brewery

Next morning, set up by a decent hot and cold buffet breakfast, we set off at 9:45 for the *Kasteelbrouwerij Ter Dolen*, eastwards in the countryside of the province of Limburg, situated in an old castle-like former abbey guesthouse, whose romantic properties we found providing a photo-opportunity for a newly-wed local couple. The usual brewery tour was greatly enhanced by the lucid and engaging explanation of the brewing process fluently provided by our guide Francis. His summation of beer as being essentially filtered, fermented porridge enhanced by hops puts it in a nutshell! As we had at St Bernardus, we presented our guide with a certificate of appreciation commemorating the Branch's visit. Much sitting in the spring sunshine imbibing tasty beer, notably their Aramand and Tripel, took place. My view of proceedings is exactly reproduced in the photo on page 108 of the current edition of CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide to Belgium* (essential reading for such trips!)



Ter Dolen guide Francis with our certificate

Then across the Dutch border, guarded by fearsome traffic jams, to the lovely town of Maastricht on the Maas, or Meuse, River. A spot to eat in a fine riverside bar the name of which escapes me was followed, after a brief and

unproductive taste of the usual overpriced and poorly-beered tourist traps in the town's principal square, by crossing the river to backstreet gem *Take One*. Here we placed ourselves in the expert hands of the landlord, who, having given one of the airheaded and loud-mouthed American tourists who infest much of the more scenic parts of our continent his comeuppance, recommended wholly appropriate beers tailored to each of our tastes. It would be a pleasure to enjoy an afternoon or evening touring the local brews in his knowledgeable company. Thence back



Great Maastricht bar the Little Pot House

over the river to taste the local Gulpener Mestreechs Ajt (clearly brewed in the local dialect!) and a fine stew in *t'Pothuiske*, The Little Pot House.

Thence back to our hotel, but not to bed. Instead Steve and I were lured forth by two young ladies of our party to stay up to 4am sampling the city's thriving student bars, which seemingly never shut. One, *Hippocampus*, is appropriately named after the part of my brain first shut down by an excess of imbibing, the organ that writes events into permanent memory...

Next day we recovered on a dry tour of the city zoo, one of the world's finest and next to the magnificent Victorian Centraal railway station. This houses some species rarely found in captivity (or, sadly these days, at all in many cases), notably a breeding colony of okapis and some elephant shrews, which are neither elephants nor shrews (though more closely related to the former than the latter) but amazingly cute little creatures. Bypassing Bier Centraal near the station – a mistake as others of our party who did not spoke highly of the establishment – we ploughed through the only downpour of our otherwise sunny long weekend to find the much-hyped *Kulminator* was mysteriously shut until well after our visit.



1 year old Zeppelin - the authors favourite

So onward through the deluge to the excellent *Afspanning 't Waagstuk*, a comfortable and civilized refuge from the inclement elements. Apart from one of the many splendid meals provided by hosteleries during our trip, we had the chance to enjoy the house beer, brewed just for them

by the Proef brewery, which specialises in brewing small batches of special beers for special places. Zeppelin commemorates the fact that the area in which the bar is situated has the unenviable distinction of being the first victim of an aerial bombing raid targeting civilians, conducted by one of the German dirigibles in question in August 1914. When I ordered a bottle, which had been recommended by our Vice-chair Alan and his partner the multi-Branch-officed Jenny after their visit there on Thursday night, the barman spontaneously suggested I complement the new-brewed bottle with one which had been aged for a year. A good suggestion, as the one-year-old Zeppelin was without doubt the finest of many fine Belgian beers tasted during the weekend. I shall withstand the temptation to spout florid – and usually to me incomprehensible – tasting notes at this point!

Saturday evening was rounded off with a return visit to Billie the Bulldog and his excellent *Bier Kafeteria*, where well-informed bar staff led us on a tasting tour of Antwerp's LocAles. De Zwarte Sinjor, The Swarthy Señor, a dark beer as its name suggests, was especially noteworthy – Antwerp having been a leading city of the Spanish Netherlands with many Spaniards settling there, Antwerpers are still known by their fellow Flemings as Sinjoren. Billies' was for me the bar of the trip, closely followed by the *Waagstuk* and, save that it seemed hardly ever to be open when we wanted to visit it, the *Oud Arsenaal*.

Next day sadly it was time to go home, pausing in Bruges to enjoy the obligatory tasting of the unique and potent De Gare in the elegant if discreetly hidden away hostelry of that name, a glass of Gulden Draak, and a visit to the well-named Bottle Shop for suitably liquid souvenirs. Rounding the stop off with a valedictory Belgian beer in 2-BE, whose window overlooking the canal has been repaired since one of the heroes of the film *In Bruges* leaped through it to escape.

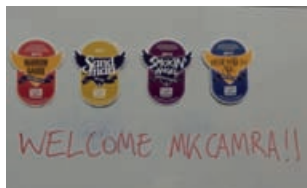
So back to Milton Keynes, tired but happy after a most enjoyable beer trip. Our hearty thanks are due to Doug Dillow and his son Carl for organising the tour, and shepherding us on and off coaches, liaising with breweries and hotels etc. throughout, and to our excellent regular coach driver Nina. I for one will certainly be back for this next year and heartily recommend it to all beer lovers. The trip is open to all, you don't have to be a CAMRA member to come.

Steve Brady

Local Beer and Cider Brewers Collect our Festival Awards



A heartening number of new microbreweries have sprung up in our area in recent years. Usually it takes a little while for the new brewery to settle down and achieve the ale they want to offer. Not so for Jon d'Este-Hoare and his Leighton Buzzard Brewery. Founded only in July last year, within three months one of his beers, 5.5% dark IPA Rebel Yell, had won a well-merited Beer of the Festival award at Milton Keynes Beer Festival. The other two beers he laid on for the Festival also polled highly with festivalgoers in their vote for that honour.



We are expected

It was with great pleasure therefore that MK CAMRA branch members travelled to Leighton Buzzard Brewery on February 20th to present Jon with his Beer of the Festival Certificate. The opportunity was taken at this event also to honour another local hero – Richard Smith of Woughton Orchard, who came to collect the Cider of the Festival certificate for his 7% cider called simply “7”.

This festival clean-sweep by local producers was in the face of competition from beers and ciders of the highest quality on offer there from all over Britain.

Leighton Buzzard brewer Jon made our branch most welcome on his premises, laying on an excellent selection of his ales supplemented by choice nibbles. Branch members were shown the brewery and the shop, open on Saturdays when LB beers can be purchased direct by the public.



Branch members in the brewery

Head Cellarman of Milton Keynes Beer Festival Carl Dillow presented Jon and Richard with their well-earned certificates on behalf of the branch, and indeed of the almost 1500 drinkers who attended our Festival and who chose these worthy local winners. Well done to both!

Steve Brady



Carl Dillow presents Richard Smith with Cider of the Festival



Carl Dillow presents Jon d'Este-Hoare with Beer of the Festival



Jon and Richard with their Awards

Cider News

Japan's NHK reports from Milton Keynes

Richard Smith, of Woughton Orchard, was approached by NHK (Japan's equivalent to the BBC here). With the general election pending, they were looking at aspects of Britain's membership of the European Union. One issue that interested them was the potential removal of the current excise duty exemption for small-scale cider producers (less than 70 hectolitres per annum) and how this might impact on the 500+ producers across the UK. NHK wanted to report on the possible consequences were this exemption to be removed.



Woughton Orchard was chosen as being typical of small cider-makers. It produces a yearly maximum of fifteen hectolitres; last year it produced only seven. If excise duty were payable on this volume, that would place a significant additional cost-burden on such a small enterprise, and possibly jeopardise its being able to continue.

Richard was keen to illustrate that there are numerous knock-on impacts beyond the obvious financial implications. For instance, if Woughton Orchard as well as other small scale cider producers ceased trading it would affect their – often small - local communities, and of course the orchards they manage. Richard works with other licence-holders at Woughton Orchard (including Laurence Conisbee of Virtual Orchard) to manage the orchard for harvesting apples and producing cider; if this were to stop the orchard would soon deteriorate. In addition, if the apples were not picked every autumn, local people would not have the opportunity to get involved and learn about cider making.

There are numerous social and environmental as well economic impacts of the exemption being removed; there has too to be an incentive for small scale enterprise, otherwise traditional crafts and traditions will die out.

NHK interviewed Richard at the Bell and Bear in Emberton, our joint Cider Pub of the Year, where Woughton "7" is

often on sale. The Japanese broadcaster also spoke to the pub's staff.

Virtual Orchard's Laurence Conisbee adds the following comments: 'Just to be clear though... this isn't about the EU influencing the UK Government. The UK signed up to the EU duty rules which requires all member states to levy a duty on all alcohol, so the exemption is illegal by the EU duty rules we signed up to. An easy solution would be to levy a duty of 1 pence per litre of cider for producers of up to 70 hectolitres which would have minimal consequences to small producers.'

'The big question for me in all this is exactly what is the National Association of Cider Makers doing about it. I spoke to the secretary of the NACM and all he would say is that the NACM is working with HM Revenue and Customs on a solution, which is the usual cloak and dagger stuff I've come to expect from them. Of course, one could question just how bothered the NACM really is, considering you cannot become a member unless you make at least 1,000,000 litres of cider (or in the case of what some large members produce should that be 'cider'!! - Ed) per year.'

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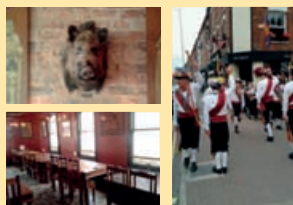


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Diary Dates

Please note that this diary information is always subject to change – check online for latest information at www.mkcamra.org.uk/diary Items marked with a tankard symbol are official CAMRA events

May 2015

Saturday 23rd

Branch Visit to Beer Festival at Three Locks, Stoke Hammond, 12:30 onwards. Bus 70 from CMK Point 12:00/Bletchley Bus Stn 12:15 (last bus back approx 17:55) or walk/cycle/swim along canal.

Thursday 28th

Branch Meeting 8.15 at the Barn CMK.

Thu - Sat 28th - 30th

Delapre Beer Festival, Delapre Park, Northampton, run this year by Northampton Council and Phipps-NBC Brewery Open Thursday 4-10, Friday and Saturday 11-10. Admission £4, free to CAMRA members. Buses X4 and X7 from Milton Keynes pass the park.

Saturday 30th

Joint Cider PotY presentation. Bell and Bear, Emberton followed by Lamb, Stoke Goldington. See separate article on p99 for details.

June 2015

Thursday 11th

Woburn Sands Crawl, Station Tavern, 19:30 then choice from Royal Oak, Fir Tree, Wethercock to Swan 21:30. Bus 300 from CMK. Last buses back 22:01 or 23:01, Train from Bletchley, last train back 22:27.

Saturday 20th

Young members' social, Moon Under Water (Xscape), 8pm
Details from Ashleigh ypc@mkcamra.org.uk

Saturday 27th

Branch trip to Hook Norton Brewery, Oxfordshire Leave Wetherspoons CMK 10am 16 or 22 seat minibus. Brewery Tour and Sampling 11:30-13:30 Lunch available to buy at The Pear Tree (Brewery tap). Maybe drop in at The Sun and Gate Hangs Low. Back to CMK by 18.00. Approx £18pp.
Contact social@mkcamra.org.uk to book places

Monday 29th

Branch Meeting, Barn, Central Milton Keynes, 8.15pm.

July 2015

Thursday 9th

Crawl by minibus round western villages hard to reach by public transport: Shoulder of Mutton, Calverton; Bell, Beachampton; Lowndes Arms, Whaddon

Mon - Sun 13th - 19th

Black Lion Leighton Buzzard Cider Festival. 20 High Street, LU7 1EA. 50 real ciders, perries, and fruit wines.

Saturday 18th

Buckingham Pub Crawl, for details check our website nearer the time or mail social@mkcamra.org.uk

Saturday 18th

Buckingham RUFC, Maids Moreton, Beer & Music Festival.

Tuesday 28th

Branch Meeting, Barn, Central Milton Keynes, 8.15pm.

August 2015

August 11th - 15th

Great British Beer Festival (GBBF), Olympia, London.
www.gbbf.org.uk

Friday 14th

Branch Visit to GBBF. Meet MK Central station at 11.00 for 11.13 (11.17 at Bletchley) direct train to Olympia. (Check train times nearer the day.)

Saturday 15th

North Bucks Villages by Minibus More places hard to reach by public transport. Check our website for details nearer the time.

Wednesday 26th

Branch Meeting, Barn, Central Milton Keynes, 8.15pm.

Looking Ahead

Wed - Sat October 14th - 17th

Concrete Pint Beer Festival at the Buszy, 401 Elder Gate MK9 1LR opposite MK Central rail station.



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