



beer moos

Summer 2014

Issue Thirty One

Memory Lane!



Back L-R: Eddie Chambers, Jim Scott, Alan Fursdon, Adam Hepburn, Barry Mayles, Front: Jenny Ellway

This picture appeared in Milton Keynes on Sunday on 10th September 2000 to promote the Milton Keynes Beer Festival.

It was taken outside the Cannon in Newport Pagnell and shows five Branch members with the Cannon's then landlord, the late Adam Hepburn. Eddie, Jim, Alan and Jenny are still members of this Branch.

Barry moved to Devon a few years ago where he plays an active role in the Exeter and East Devon Branch.

Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA branch came into existence in August 1982 when four pioneers met in the Rose and Crown, Newport Pagnell and decided to establish a CAMRA presence locally. Thirty-two years - and twenty-one beer festivals - later, our membership currently stands at 715 and is growing.

But there's always room for more, so - come and join us!

Memory Lane!

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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



The Cannon *Free House*

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run by the Hepburn family.

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18 years running in the
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Chair's Thoughts for the Quarter



Ken Croucher

Sitting watching the sun go down in Tenerife after a hard day diving. Cream cracked; sipping something cold, alcoholic and thirst quenching; thoughts drifting. Since I took on the Chair's role I have seen lots of CAMRA stuff locally, regionally (I volunteered to be Regional Secretary) and nationally (anonymous and sometimes bureaucratic emails arriving from on high).

So, what profound ideas can I offer? The answer, I'm sad to say, is none. Beer is profound, but enjoying it is one of life's simpler pleasures. We in UK are essentially unique in the survival of our traditionally stored, conditioned and dispensed real ale – protecting that is CAMRA's reason for existing. From an international perspective real ale is a small local anomaly. The rest of the world gets along just fine with pasteurised and carbonated beers served cold. So do the consumers of 92% of UK beer.

As Chair I have to support CAMRA's party line, and indeed I do, with caveats: "Real" ale, made from top quality ingredients, brewed, stored and dispensed (almost) perfectly, is very very good indeed. Global brewers may produce boring bland beers, but their processes, quality control and products are faultless. So are the best of their products. The same applies to the very best smaller brewers. The big challenge today comes from so-called "craft" brewers. The term is imprecise, even though most beer cognoscenti understand it: For those unfamiliar visit Wetherspoons and try the Brew Dog Punk IPA and the Sixpoint brewery cans (really!).

I go on about this interminably, but it matters. If CAMRA has a future it's ultimately to do with two things: British beer and British pubs. If British Beer is not to disappear under straightforward consumer choice it has to evolve. That means taking the very best of our "real" ale tradition and integrating it with the "craft" tradition. It deeply means that drinking a high quality British Beer is an experience people truly enjoy and want to repeat. If British Pubs are to thrive they have to respond to consumers who want a range of things: Ambience; service; hygiene; family friendliness; excellent food, beer, other alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

I'm approaching a major milestone: Some time in the next few months I shall stop making my own beer and sell my brewery. After that I'll be dependent on others to supply my beer. Quite a scary thought!

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Beer Moos will be published on: Sept 1st. We must have your stories, news and advertisements by: Aug 20th. Late copy cannot be guaranteed entry.

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Branch Aims for 2014 -15

The Aims for 2014 adopted by Milton Keynes and North Bucks branch earlier this year, published in the last issue of Beer Moos, were drawn up to reflect the national CAMRA Articles of Association. At the National AGM of CAMRA in Scarborough in April, these were extensively amended.

At our May branch meeting, members felt that this change to the national objectives on which they had been modelled rendered our branch Aims obsolete. The members also felt that our branch Aims should be concrete, measurable, and relevant to what our branch itself could hope to achieve in the current year.

The branch therefore decided to replace our previous Aims for the year ahead with the following three, with a target of achieving them all by the next branch AGM in early 2015:

i) *To run a successful Beer Festival.*

ii) *To achieve CAMRA Green Status for at least 50% of the pubs in our branch area on our WhatPub? database.*

Green Status means updating this database with accurate information about each pub covering the 23 specific points required to be recorded by CAMRA nationally.

iii) *To increase the number of Beer Scores submitted each month by branch members for pubs in our area by 30%.*

You can help us achieve this - see the article on how to submit beer scores below.



Ship Ashore, Pub of the Year 2014

Have you Scored yet?

CAMRA's National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is an easy 0-5 point scale for judging beer quality, and to find out which pubs consistently sell well-kept ale.

So we invite all real ale drinkers, not just CAMRA members, to send us their beer scores for pubs both in our area, and elsewhere in the UK. We forward scores for out-of-area pubs to the relevant branches.

These results help us decide which pubs to consider for the Good Beer Guide.

E-mail your scores to us at pubs@mkcamra.org.uk, bring them to any of our meetings or social events, or submit them online at www.beerscoring.org.uk.

You'll need to give your name, CAMRA Membership Number (if you're a member), Date of Survey, Pub's Name and Location, Beer Name and Brewery, and of course, your score.

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>

Virtual Orchard Cidery

Grand Opening

A large and cheerful crowd, estimated at around 80, gathered at Old Wolverton's Galleon Wharf on Friday evening, May 16th to celebrate the official opening of Virtual Orchard's cidery.

Guest of honour was William Sitwell, food writer and critic, Masterchef judge, editor of Waitrose Kitchen magazine, and himself a cider-maker, who declared the facility open by cutting a ribbon on the cider-press. Other VIP's in attendance were Mark Lancaster MP (Virtual Orchard is in his constituency) and Mayor of Milton Keynes, Cllr Brian White.



Red Phoenix



Proprietor Laurence Conisbee speaks

Entertainment was on hand with professional story-teller Red Phoenix whose dramatic account of St Dunstan and the cider delighted all, followed by poet Richard Frost, whose skilful take on Milton's *Paradise Lost* with its tale of Eve and the apple, is reproduced on page 12. William Sitwell surprised everyone by also reading a poem he had written for the occasion. The Mayor expressed his enthusiasm and support for the cidery, and local folk-band Mungo Jungo provided the music.



Mayor and Mark Lancaster MP



William Sitwell declares cidery open



Sampling

Opening and speeches over, the company enjoyed a snack buffet washed down with generous samples of Virtual Orchard and Woughton ciders, with apple-juice for those who unfortunately had to drive.

Virtual Orchard moved into the cidery a year ago and proprietor Laurence Conisbee has spent the intervening months establishing a new production line for his range of twelve seasonal ciders, all made using local apples. Virtual Orchard also makes apple juice, mead, and apple brandy, and sells direct from the cidery as well as various local outlets.

Indeed, business is now so brisk that Laurence's wife Hannah sometimes wears a top with the words 'Cider Widow' inscribed on it!

For further information visit:

www.virtualorchard.co.uk



Mayor Speaks



Grand Opening - the crowd



Mungo Jungo



Hannah Conisbee in her 'Cider Widow' top

Branch Pub of the Year 2014 the Ship Ashore, Willen

As reported in our last issue, this year our branch chose the Ship Ashore at Willen as Pub of the Year. It is not usual for a Milton Keynes estate pub to excel in real ale but this one does so magnificently, and is a worthy winner. Our branch presented manager Richard Bradshaw with his certificate at a social at the pub in March. It will now go ahead for regional judging.



News North

Black Horse, Great Linford ran its first and very successful beer festival over May bank-holiday with ales from Concrete Cow, Purity, Gales/Fullers, and Adhams.

News East

Robin Hood, Clifton **Reynes**

Beer Moos is sorry to learn that Reg Pearson, licensee of this iconic and unspoiled country pub, is leaving on June 9th. Reg has been a stalwart supporter of CAMRA and will be much missed. His successor is Simon Horrocks, a local man who promises that the pub, which is a free house, will remain committed to real ale. See separate item on p8.



News West

Crown, Gawcott Ian Mendola, landlord of the Crown, is organising Gawcott village's annual beer festival on 5th July. A classic car rally is also taking place with up to 200 cars expected, along with a pig roast, large selection of beers, and music all day. Venue is Richard Roper Fields from 2pm till midnight. More info on www.thecrownatgawcott.co.uk or call 01280 822322.

In the Aylesbury Vale Village Pub competition for 2013-4 the Crown was voted Best Value Food Pub and was runner up as Best Family Pub. Beer Moos congratulates licensees Ian and Lisa for these awards.

News South

Bletchley

According to MKWeb, Wetherspoons is negotiating to acquire the long-vacant former Co-Op building in Queensway, Bletchley. Since ownership of the site is apparently disputed, no planning application can be submitted until negotiations can be concluded successfully, and at this stage Wetherspoons would not comment.

The building is in the middle of a proposed no-drinking zone but some councillors believe the presence of a 'Spoons' might actually help reduce the number of people drinking on the street by giving them somewhere indoors.

Read more at www.mkweb.co.uk/News/Eyesore-former-Co-Op-site-in-Bletchley-may-become-Wetherspoons-pub-20140526140137.htm

Bull and Butcher, Fenny

Stratford recently re-opened after refurbishment. The new licensees are Lee Sweet and Sarah Kelly, who are both locals - Lee hails from Newton Longville and Sarah from Fenny Stratford itself.

Three real ales from the Punch Taverns list are on tap, including a monthly-changing guest ale. Very reasonably priced pub food is served from noon- 3pm and 5-8pm Tuesday to Saturday, and noon to 5pm on Sundays. There is a large enclosed garden which is ideal for families.



Red Lion, Fenny Stratford now serves the following ciders:- Thatchers Cheddar Valley, Weston's Rosie's Pig, Weston's Country Perry,



Thatchers Heritage, and Old Rosie. However, beer lovers need not feel neglected as Guy and Glynis still serve a constantly changing choice of ales in tip-top condition.

News Central

Prince Albert, Bradwell Village ran a beer festival with a difference over May bank-holiday weekend.



With a 'Civil War' theme, the festival pitched ales from Lancashire against some from newer London breweries – and everybody was a winner! Licensee Dean Davies got the idea from the pub's first festival fifteen years ago which was titled 'Albert's Private War' and featured beers with war-themed names like Bombardier and Lancaster Bomber.

Beer Moos was of course in the thick of the fray and we can report that all the beers were all in fighting-fit condition, and the 10% discount for CAMRA members helped to make them even better.

Fighting on the London side were:

Sambrooks *Wandle* (ABV 4.5%)
Redemption *Hopspur* (ABV 4.5%)
Hackney *Best Bitter* (ABV 4.5%)
London Fields *Love Not War* (ABV 4.5%)
East London Brewery *Cow Catcher* (ABV 4.5%)

and in on the Red Rose County's frontline were:

Bank Top *Barley to Beer* (ABV 4.5%) from Bolton
Dunscar Bridge *DBB* (ABV 4.5%) also from Bolton
Green Mill *Big Chief* (ABV 4.5%) from Rochdale
Reedly Hallows *Monkholme* (ABV 4.5%) from Burnley
Old School *Headmaster* (ABV 4.5%) from Warton, near Carnforth

There were also two ciders and a pyder (apple and pear juice co-fermented) from Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and South Wales, and a selection of non-combatant ales from Charles Wells whose pub it is. All-in-all a successful and enjoyable event which Beer Moos hopes will be repeated soon.

New Inn, New

Bradwell also had a May Bank-holiday beer festival with nine ales and four ciders, plus the pub's usual Charles Wells house beers. Beer Moos's spy found the ales to be in good form with a lively crowd present to enjoy them.



The ales were:

From Frog Island (Northampton) *Croak and Stagger*, *Fire-Bellied Toad*, *Natterjack*, *Shoemaker*
From Great Oakley (Tiffeld) *Gobble*, *Wagtail*, *Wot's Occurring*
From Red Squirrel (Hemel Hempstead) *Mister Squirrel*, *Jack Black*

Suffolk Punch, Heelands Beer Moos has heard that a new management team has settled in at the Punch and that food is again being served. More importantly perhaps, we've also heard that ongoing discussions with the new tenant and the Parks Trust (which owns the pub) look positive for its future. Beer Moos hopes that the outcome of these negotiations will ensure that the Suffolk Punch, which is the only pub in a quite large area of our city, is re-established as a great community asset.

CIDER NEWS



Lovers of real cider need to know where to find it. The pubs listed here are the ones in our area that I have visited so far that have it on sale regularly. If I come across any more I will add them at a later date.

Bell & Bear (Emberton), *Old Swan* (Astwood), *Robin Hood* (Clifton Reynes), *Swan* (Olney), *White Hart* (Sherington), *Wetherspoons* (Midsummer Bvd Central MK), *Lamb* (Stoke Goldington), *Barn* (Central Milton Keynes).

Anne Clark
Branch Cider Rep

Real-Ale Stalwart Retires

Members of Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA branch gathered at the Robin Hood, Clifton Reynes in late May to bid farewell to landlord Reg Pearson who is retiring after 20 years. Under Reg's occupancy the pub has been a real-ale stronghold, and noted for its excellent food as well, cooked mainly by Reg himself!

Reg is not quitting the bar entirely and will be filling locum positions from now on. His successor in this unspoilt village free-house is local man Simon Horrocks, who takes over on June 9th. Beer Moos wishes Reg a satisfying retirement and welcomes Simon, whom we hope to interview for our next issue. Reg will be a hard act to follow but we are assured that Simon is up to the task and that the Robin Hood will continue to serve excellent real ale.



Mike Benner, Chief Executive, is leaving us on 13th June



After twenty years with CAMRA, and ten years as our chief executive, Mike Benner is leaving us to take up the new post of managing director of SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers. Mike will remain in post until mid-June to ensure a smooth transition.

To ensure that our organisation will run efficiently while a new chief executive is recruited, CAMRA's National Executive has agreed an interim structure in which the chief executive's role and responsibilities will be divided between two existing senior management team members.

Colin Valentine, CAMRA's national chairman said:

While Mike will be sorely missed, I am confident that the staff team he has created is strong and that, as an organisation, we are in a very strong position to ensure continuity in delivering our strategic campaigning objectives.

I'm sure you will all take the opportunity to join me and my colleagues on the National Executive in thanking Mike for his hard work and commitment over the last twenty years and in wishing him the very best for the future.

Beer Moos adds its thanks and best wishes to Mike for all the hard work he's done on our behalf at CAMRA's head office, without which branches such as ours could not function.



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Branch Recruits at Bank Holiday Beer Festival

MK and North Bucks CAMRA showed our flag with a recruitment stall at the Black Horse, Great Linford, who were one of a number of local hosteleries running beer festivals over the Late May Bank Holiday weekend.



The Black Horse festival was organised in support of the restoration of local landmark St. Peter's Church by the pub's deputy manager Jenny Mitchell, who kindly invited CAMRA to participate. She also wisely chose Sunday, the only day not to feature traditional British Bank Holiday pouring rain, for the outdoor event in the pub's spacious canalside garden.

Branch secretary Steve Brady and our Public Transport Officer Jenny Ellway and her partner Alan (who both, appropriately, came by bus) set up our stall before the festival opened at noon under the pub's Pimms gazebo, which in the event wasn't required. Other Branch members dropped in to enjoy the sunshine and excellent ales as the afternoon progressed.



Said ales comprised LocAles Cock & Bull and Midsummer Ale from Concrete Cow brewery and Purity Mad Goose and Gold, plus Aspoll's cider, in the garden beer tent, with

Adnams Mosaic, Gales Spring Sprinter and the inevitable Doom Bar at the pub bar, all in good condition. As were the beefburgers cooked by the pub's sous-chef Anthony Martin.

The Black Horse, built in 1801 to slake the thirst of navvies building the Grand Junction Canal, the Regency's answer to HS2,



was a superb gem of the local beer scene 30 years ago, with a lovely canalside setting and a diversity of bars offering superb ales. After a truly appalling and vandalous gutting in the 1980s by Allied Brewers, its then owners, it sank into a sad decline under sundry pubcos, reaching its nadir with a silly name, The Proud Perch, (dubbed the Pompous Prawn by locals) a decade back. Under landlady Marian Powell, deputy manager Jenny, and their team, the pub has been regaining its glory as a real ale venue, something CAMRA is always delighted to support.



Resisting the allure of the bouncy castle, Branch volunteers combined business with pleasure, supping delectable beers in the sunshine whilst being ready to answer questions about CAMRA and distribute Campaign recruiting literature to the public who thronged the event.

First Orchard

Richard Frost

Hopefully some of these enquiries will translate into new members for our – or in one case possibly East Suffolk – CAMRA Branch.



Taking down our stall at the end of the festival our Branch activists shared satisfaction at a worthwhile and enjoyable afternoon with the Black Horse team. The profile of our local CAMRA had been raised in the community and the ability of the branch to run a successful stall at such events – a new venture for us - demonstrated. And much fine ale enjoyed by our volunteers. Thank you Black Horse – we will be back!

Steve Brady

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*Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, I can't believe
That all our worldly worries have been caused
By a girl who scrumped an apple one summer's eve.*

*Apparently it was a talking snake
Which tempted her to steal one from the tree,
Knowing how much trouble it would make
Because she had been told to leave it be.*

*Seriously, why should any fruit
Be cause for such celestial concern?
Foraging for gifts in Nature's garden
Is one survival skill all creatures learn.*

*We're told it was because the fruit gave wisdom;
Inherent in its seed, there was the knowledge
Of how to reach a higher state of being
Which can't be learned at any school or college.*

*But really, if you want to know the truth,
God knew what could be done with apples pressed.
They make the cider that makes us so merry;
No wonder he kept it close to his chest.*

*A drink too good for mortals, so divine
It carries with it a heavenly warning:
Touch any fruit but this one, otherwise
You're going to know about it in the morning.*

*So thanks to Eve, who sneaked into that garden
Thanks to that snake, and never mind the cost;
And to those who keep the orchards, and make cider -
Without them, Paradise surely would be lost!*



Richard Frost

Editor's note: Richard was elected as Bard of Stony Stratford in 2013. Please note that this poem is Richard's copyright. He has kindly given Beer Moos permission to include it here, but it may not be reproduced elsewhere without his written authorisation.

In Search of a Beer



Doug Dillow

Janet and I have recently returned from a 2 week holiday in Cyprus where I had to endure the disgusting taste of Leon and worse still Keo. Having had a good whinge one night about my need for a 'proper beer', our host suggested that we should drive the 186km round trip from Oroklini to the Tsada hills near Paphos in search of the new brewery that was making craft beer.

So next day we set off on our journey that took us through Larnaca and round Limassol (a dozen times) and finally after many wrong turns and missed or missing sign posts (I was driving not navigating) we arrived at the village of Tsada. We had been told by mine host that on arrival at Tsada we should not go into the village but look for the signposts for the brewery – guess what - we missed that sign as well. There was only one thing left to do and that was ask someone where we could find it. The people I spoke to by the roadside only spoke 'foreign' and couldn't understand a word I was saying. So in desperation I pulled up at the local shop, went in and in broken Greek and English I asked if the lady understood English. In a Yorkshire accent she replied with a wink "I think so, just a little". She then told us to carry on down the road for 300 yards and it was on the right.



After 5 hours on the road we finally arrived at the gates of the brewery only to find them locked and the brewery apparently closed. Absolutely gutted I drove up the road a bit and into their back car park with the intentions of turning round and starting the journey back – my words at this point are not printable. Janet suddenly yelled for me to stop as the back door of the brewery was open and there was someone in there. At last I thought that maybe my lottery numbers may win that night as my luck was getting better.

I made my way towards the door and was greeted by a very pleasant young lady named Laura who explained that she and her sister were the brewers but that the brewery visits had finished at 1pm and tasting in their outdoor bar finished at 3pm – my heart sank as it was now 3.20pm!

I explained that we had driven all the way from Oroklini

and that I had hoped to see the brewery as I had signed the original petition to allow them to open. She told me she was really sorry that it was all closed but offered to open the gates and show us around the brewery, which of course we accepted.

She told us how Aphrodite's Rock Brewing Company is a family run business employing well-qualified and highly experienced brewing specialists from Great Britain as well as employing local staff who all share their dream to create and brew their wide cosmopolitan range of fresh, full-flavoured locally handcrafted "Island Beers" and "Artisan Ales" for the pleasure of local residents and tourists that come to Cyprus. She allowed me to take some photos, one of which is attached showing the brewer herself. She told us that things were not made easy for them and they had to overcome a great many unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles for nearly three years to finally be permitted to brew in Cyprus. (My thoughts are that Keo were probably bribing the authorities not to allow it)



Again she apologised that she could not give us any beer to try as the brewery was closed, however, she said as we had travelled so far she would give us a couple of bottles to take away. At this point we met mother who was just as pleasant and she gave us three 70cl bottles and two glasses and then I managed to buy six more beers. This meant I had one of all 5 beers they make regularly plus some limited edition beers.

Laura then went to the trouble of phoning a bar in the village and asked them if they were still doing food as we needed to eat. Unfortunately they had stopped doing food until the evening but she told them we were coming down to try the draught beer anyhow.

Unfortunately because I had a long drive back I could only have one but by God it was good. I have since tried all of the bottles and can thoroughly recommend that if you are in Cyprus you search out the Aphrodite Rock Brewery Company beers which are now in over 700 outlets in Cyprus, mainly in the Paphos area.

As a footnote because of our poor direction skills we even started off the wrong way when we left the village and this 186km (115 mile) round trip actually took us just over 200 miles but was well worth it!

Buszwords



Jenny Ellway

CAMRA supports the drink driving laws and is keen to promote public transport as a means of getting to the pub. I have been using the buses to travel to the pub since I moved to Milton Keynes, so taking on the role of Public Transport Officer seemed the natural thing to do.

Of course travelling by public transport limits the number of pubs I visit: it excludes pubs that are not on a bus route or pubs that are on a bus route, but there is no service in the evenings or on Sundays.

So where can you go in the evening? Our Branch Pub of the Year 2014, the Ship Ashore, is served by routes 1, 2 and 321. The 321 runs between Olney and Steeple Claydon via Newport Pagnell, Willen, CMK, Buckingham and Padbury but only until 19.40 to Olney and 20.00 to Buckingham. The last number 1, however, is at 23.05 to Newport Pagnell and at 22.47 to Bletchley via CMK. The last number 2 leaves Willen at 22.31 to Newport Pagnell and 23.20 to Westcroft via CMK.

The Victoria Inn and the Prince Albert, both in Bradwell Village have service number 33/33A running past the top of Vicarage Road only until early evening, but if you don't mind a ten minute walk along the redway between Loughton Road and Grafton Street, you can catch the number 5 or number 6 to Wolverton or to Bletchley via CMK until after midnight.

Again, if you are prepared for a short walk from the bus stop, the Black Horse on Wolverton Road, by the canal bridge, is accessible by the number 7, alighting at Selkirk Drive, Oakridge Park. Although the latest bus route map and bus timetable both show the number 7 travelling the full length of Selkirk Drive, at the moment there is only one stop in Selkirk Drive and the buses turn here and continue along Wolverton Road away from the pub. I have been told that more bus stops in Selkirk Drive are planned, shortening the walk to the Black Horse. The last number 7 leaves at 23.06 Monday to Friday, 22.36 on Saturdays and 21.36 on Sundays towards CMK and Bletchley and at 23.21 Monday to Saturday and 22.21 on Sundays towards Wolverton.

Branching Out

I would like to feature pubs outside our branch area that are well worth a visit by public transport. For this issue, I have chosen the Black Lion in Leighton Buzzard High Street. It is a characterful pub serving 8 real ales and 60 foreign beers, plus 8 real ciders, and it has a pleasant courtyard garden at the rear. The last number 70 leaves for MK at 18.38 Monday to Saturday and the number 150 at 19.15 Monday to Saturday and at 17.43 on Sundays. There is a ten minute walk to Leighton Buzzard Rail Station where the trains run to Bletchley and Milton Keynes Central late into the night. Unfortunately, there is no direct route between Buckingham and Leighton Buzzard: journeys have to be made via Milton Keynes or Aylesbury.



Black Lion

This is just a small selection with more to follow in future issues. Please check bus/train times before making your journey.

For starters, why not join us on the Buckingham pub crawl on Saturday 19th July? We'll all be travelling by bus, either the 32 from Bletchley, calling at CMK and MK Rail Station or the X5 from CMK and MK Rail Station. We hope that members from Buckingham and the surrounding area will come along too.

Please see our website www.mkcamra.org.uk for details.

2014 CAMRA jaunt to Belgium



Lynne Lane

Thursday morning started off bright and early with the usual pick up at the MK Coachway. There is always someone who's late - this year there were two. They chased us down the motorway by car all the way to Kent, eventually catching up at Ashford! The first stop in Belgium was the Slaghmuylder Brewery. We were given a couple of beers to try which was much appreciated after the long coach trip. Doug then had the usual trouble rounding everyone one up to get back on the coach. As there were more people on this trip it must have been trickier.



Next stop - Holiday Inn Express in Mechelen. We stayed in this town a few years ago but I had forgotten how quiet and peaceful it was. Lots of narrow side streets with wonderful old buildings. The hotel itself had been recently refurbished (you could still smell the paint). The rooms were lovely; clean and modern with all the facilities you would expect.

We wandered down the old Vismarkt (fish market) to try the local Carolus beers. Eating out for vegetarians in Belgium is difficult. We generally look for an Italian place and found one in a back street with a wood fired pizza oven. Lovely!!!



On Friday morning there was time for a short walk after breakfast. We found a pretty knot garden. Then it was back on the coach for a couple of visits and an evening stop in Brussels. One of the guys who missed the coach the day before was late again and had



to go to Brussels by train. The first stop was Chocolaterie Duval. The talk was humorous and there were plenty of samples to try (always good). Carl & David were roped in to have a go at filling chocolates I like the headgear! The shop did a good trade before it was back on the coach. The late arrival caught up within Brussels and received a round of applause. Next stop the Cantillon Brewery which produces *geuze*. This unique beer relies on wild yeast from the atmosphere and a long period (up to three years) in oak barrels to mature. The resulting drink is very much an acquired taste, very sour. Doug called time and for once he didn't have to chase us out of the bar or shop. There were a lot of samples left untouched after we left.

The rest of the evening in Brussels was ours with the understanding that the coach left at 10pm. We eventually found the Delirium Café tucked away in a side street. The bar is over several floors with the main bar in the cellar. They were in the Guinness Book of Records as having the largest selection of bottled beers. We chose La Chouffe Houblon and Delirium Tremens for our first samples. Then it was time for another pizza. We then went back in the Delirium for a final beer of the day. Miraculously, no-one missed the coach!

On Saturday we had the morning to explore the pretty town with its many old buildings. Then it was back on the coach to Ostend and the Hotel Marion. Ostend is very different - a bit of a concrete jungle with lots of noise, traffic and people. The faded glory of Hotel Marion was a complete contrast to the smart modern hotel in



Mechelen! That evening we went to Ypres for the Menin Gate Ceremony. The town was crowded but we should have had plenty of time to get something to eat and drink. We eventually we found an Italian café (my husband Matthew's third pizza that weekend!). A few others from our party having found the place as well, it should have been a nice relaxing meal. When we ordered another round of drinks they seemed to be getting short of beer, so the waiter said he would find something. Note the surprised looks on Ray's & Matthew's faces, Carlsberg!!



Will they get drummed out of CAMRA? The bill didn't arrive so we ended up throwing the money at the waiter and running down the road to catch the 8pm ceremony. The service was short but moving and, with all the anniversary events this year, it was nice to have taken part in one.

Sunday morning was another lovely day and rather than spend it in the town centre we opted to walk round Maria Hendrikapark, a park with a lake and woodland walks. We had a coffee and watched the ducks (sorry no bread). The last stop of the day was to another park, Leopoldpark, just off the harbour. We sat in the brilliant sunshine with our final couple of Belgium beers. We had Keyte Triple & Brugse Zot blond. Both are quite strong but were ones we hadn't tried before.

Then sad to say it was time to get the bags and head home. Thank-you once again to our coach driver Nina (who did a brilliant job on some very narrow stretches of road especially in Brussels). The last thanks go to Doug Dillow for organising the trip again. I am sure we are all looking forward to next year's jaunt. I know I am!

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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

Please note that the next three branch meetings will be held on the last THURSDAY of the month in the meeting room at the Barn, Secklow Gate West, CMK.

June 2014

Saturday 14th

Pub crawl round East London, Meet MK Central Rail Station 10am or Walthamstow Central Bus Station (above Walthamstow Central Tube) 12 noon. This crawl requires local travel so we advise obtaining a Travelcard. There's also a fair amount of walking – but it's worth it!

Tuesday 17th

Branch Social, Prince George, Tattenhoe from 8pm.

Thursday 27th

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

July 2014

 A branch social will be arranged for the week 7th - 12th for details see our website nearer the time.

Saturday 19th

Buckingham Pub Crawl with possible visit to Buckingham R.U.F.C Beer Festival. Meet King's Head, Market Hill 12.15pm (Details TBC – see website) X5 Coach 11.33 (CMK stop H4) 11.45 (Central Station) arrives 12.07 32 bus 11.07 from Bletchley 11.23 (CMK stop H4) 11.29 (station) arrives 11.50.

Wednesday 30th

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

August 2014

 A branch social will be arranged for the week 4th - 9th for details see our website nearer the time.

12th - 16th

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

Friday 15th

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.)

Tuesday 26th

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

Looking Ahead

Wednesday October 15th - Saturday 18th

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

Other Dates for your Diary

June 2014

Friday 13th - Saturday 14th

31st Rugby CAMRA Beer Festival, Thornfield Indoor Bowls Club, Bruce Williams Way, Rugby CV22 5LJ
www.rugbybeerfestival.com

Fri 20th - Sat 21st

Buckingham Table charity beer festival at the Woolpack, Well St., Buckingham. 20 real ales plus ciders.
Visit www.buckinghamtable.org/2014-beer-festival for details and beer list.

Friday 20th - Saturday 21st

Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA Beer Festival, Co-op Sports Club, 23 Dugdale St, Nuneaton CV11 5QJ

Saturday 21st

Carrington Arms, Moulsoe, Beer Festival 12pm onwards.

July 2014

Friday 11th - Sunday 13th

Stony Stratford Cricket Club Beer Festival
Ostlers Lane, Stony Stratford, MK11 1AR. for details visit www.stonystratfordcc.co.uk

Friday 11th - Sunday 13th

Black Lion, 20 High St, Leighton Buzzard - Cider Festival.

Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th

Swan Inn, MK Village beer festival 12pm onwards.

August 2014

Sunday 24th - Monday 25th

Galleon, Old Wolverton (beer, cider + sausage festival, inc. live music.

Looking Ahead

Wednesday October 8th - Saturday 11th

37th Bedford CAMRA Beer and Cider Festival 2014
Corn Exchange, Bedford

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