

BREWERY SET TO OPEN IN MK (p10)

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Beer Festival Update

Well, the necessary red tape has either been completed or is in progress – so it's "All Systems Go" for our reborn Concrete Pint beer festival.

On Thursday 25th October, at 12 noon, the Milton Keynes Beer Festival will open its doors (well, actually, the doors of The Pitz, in the Woughton Centre) to the public. The Pitz is a popular local music venue; its home page is at <http://www.miltonkeynes.com/music/pitzhome>, where you can also find useful links to local hotels and suchlike.

The Festival will run for three days, from Thursday to Saturday. Each day we will be open from noon to 11pm (but on the Saturday evening, we may have to close early if the beer runs out!) Admission is free to CAMRA members, and is free to the public before 5pm every day, and all day Saturday. If you are a non-member, admission on the Thursday and Friday evenings after 5pm will be £3.00.

We will have about 50 Real Ales available, as well as five real ciders and a perry. And it should be easier to sample a wide range without giving your liver too much punishment – in line with latest CAMRA policy, we will have the new 1/3 pint measures available in addition to the more normal halves and pints, with the pint glasses being marked for all 3 measures.

There will be plenty of publicity around the town and county – there may even be a poster in the pub where you picked up this copy of Beer Moos. The Pitz is a brisk walk from the MK Central Railway Station – about 1.5 miles. Its location is well-known to MK taxi drivers, and we are investigating the possibility of a shuttle bus service.

For more information as we get closer to the date, please check <http://www.mkcamra.org.uk/beerfestival.htm>. This will be kept updated as we get further information, and we hope to have the Beer List, amongst other things, on this page.

Hope to see you in The Pitz!

Colin Zealley *Festival Organiser*

Sponsorship

Interested in sponsorship? Sponsoring a barrel for £50 gets your business a mention in the Festival Programme, and space on the end of the sponsored barrel. Individual sponsorship is welcome in any amount of £10 or over. Contact pr@mkcamra.org.uk for details, or the editor.

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Beer Styles

Golden Summers with Beer to Match

Summer time, when summer suns are glowing (we hope), and the pub garden invites us to sip something cool and refreshing on the benches under the parasols. In warm weather you don't want anything too high in drowsiness-inducing alcohol, and though low-gravity dark milds like Batemans DM or Greene King XX fit that bill, summer seems the time to quaff sunny coloured beers – pale and golden ales, and bitters.

As we saw in last issue of Moos, all British beer originally resembled today's Milds. Then came a revolution in the shape of India Pale Ale, which changed the face of brewing early in the 19th century. The new technologies of the Industrial Revolution enabled brewers to use pale malts to fashion beers that were genuinely golden or pale bronze in colour.

First brewed in London and Burton-on-Trent for the colonial market, IPAs were strong in alcohol and high in hops: the preservative character of the hops helped keep the beers in good condition during the long voyage by sailing ship round the Cape to India and other outposts of empire. Similar beers, but with less alcohol and hops, were developed for the domestic market, and were known as Pale Ale.

Today Pale Ale (on the rare occasions you can still find it) is usually a bottled version of Bitter, though historically the styles are different. Marston's Pedigree is an example of a Burton Pale Ale, not a Bitter, while the same brewery's Old Empire is a fascinating interpretation of an authentic Victorian IPA. Look for juicy malt, citrus fruit and a big spicy, peppery bitter hop character, with strengths of 4% upwards. So-called IPAs with strengths of around 3.5% are simply not true to style, but are mostly ordinary bitters.

Towards the end of the 19th century, brewers built large estates of tied pubs. They moved away from vatted beers stored for many months and developed 'running beers' that could be served after a few days' storage in pub cellars. Draught Mild was a 'running beer' along with a new type that was dubbed Bitter by drinkers. Bitter grew out of Pale Ale but was generally deep bronze to copper in colour due to the use of slightly darker malts such as crystal that give the beer fullness of palate. Best is a stronger version of Bitter but there is considerable crossover. Bitter falls into the 3.4% to 3.9%

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or Buckingham Trading Standards at 5-7 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1UP,
Tel: 08454 040506

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Neil Richards - 01536 358670

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Moosings from the Chair

Happy Birthday to us, Happy Birthday to us, Happy Birthday dear Beer Moos, Happy Birthday to us! Yes, it's just over a year since we launched our newsletter, and we are very proud of it and its success so far. A circulation of 2000 is superb after just one year!

So what's on my mind at the moment? The Beer Festival for sure – I get to have an influence on what beers we have and then get to look after them all during the festival. The list isn't finalised yet, so if YOU have a 'must have' beer for the fest do let us know, and we'll see what we can do.

Next up, I've been doing a bit of brewery history research lately; and it doesn't make very good reading. It all stems from my on/off habit of collecting things connected with breweries in the UK, particularly my favourite ones. Looking back since I first started on this Real Ale odyssey, how many breweries in the UK do you think have closed in the last 30 years? Could you guess? 20, 30, more? I have had a quick count up, and it come to an astonishing 78! It's not stopped either, Marston's are the latest to be 'at it', and have taken over Ringwood of Hampshire. They only had 7 pubs, so why, why, why? It's a national disgrace.

None of these were micros either, they mostly had tens and often hundreds of pubs. The great majority of these pubs are still open, but they are now owned by giant 'pubcos' who exist solely for shareholder profit. The only interest these pubcos have in their customers is as revenue sources. And all too often, this also applies to the people who run the pubs for them; rent can be increased to unviable levels, to squeeze out one more drop of profit. When rent increases make the business unviable, they sell the failing pub off as a house, and there goes the social heart of another community. Some of the pubcos own 3000 pubs or more. It is high time the government did something to protect our landlords and drinkers alike.

Still, every cloud has a silver lining. Lots of breweries closing does mean there is room for new ones to start. And as you'll read elsewhere in this

issue, Milton Keynes at last has its very own Concrete Cow Brewery, whose ales will hopefully be on offer at our forthcoming festival, as well as some Free Houses in the area.

Another thing that has come to my attention due to delving into beer styles, etc. has been the immense change in bottled beer available in pubs. I have the sad news to tell you that we are almost facing the death of Light Ale! (see opposite). Not so long ago, most breweries of a certain size produced a good range of bottled beers, usually in half pint bottles, on sale in their pubs. The mainstay of these ranges was 'Light Ale' (sometimes called Pale Ale). We mustn't forget Brown Ale either, but most brewers had abandoned their own Browns in favour of Manns Brown.

So how many pubs still sell Light Ale? Here I need your help. I know the Cannon does in Newport Pagnell, but that's the only one I've found so far! Why is this? What on earth happened to the classic 'Light and Bitter'? How many of us started our drinking years with the request, "a Light and Bitter, please!"? I'd be interested to hear your theories, findings, ... and all those memories as well please. Please mail me at chairman@mkcamra.org.uk.

Talking of what used to happen years ago brings me to another pet hate subject for this issue. Pub Etiquette, (or lack of it!) Am I alone, or do others agree that people's manners – on both sides of the bar – have taken a tumble in recent years? On the customer's side of the bar, how many times have you been patiently waiting to be served, when a new arrival comes up to the bar, and when the bar person looks up and asks "Who's next?" they push forward and get served before you? Gosh, does that wind me up!

On the service side of the bar, having the whole transaction concluded with just grunts, (or even at one pub, no conversation whatsoever!), is another source of annoyance. Just how difficult is it to smile and be polite? Perhaps some pubs ought to look at how they train their bar staff?

I have two more things to mention to you:

Firstly, I don't know about you, but are you getting fed up with pubs that purport to be such but are nothing more than restaurants? Another one of these has recently re-opened, and Mrs Chair and I went along to see if they had any real ale. As it happened, a local who had put up with the pub's closure also was checking it out for the first time.

The poor chap not only had to put up with overpriced beer (£2.90 for GK IPA!), but also was served a very short measure, as was I. To add the final insult, the local asked "how to get to the garden now the pub has changed". The response floored me – "You can only sit in the garden if you are eating..." Suffice to say, I can't tell you the pub name as I have a complaint about short measures in hand with Trading Standards. I wish I could ask you all to avoid it, as it deserves no custom at all.



Lastly, we are not political at all here in CAMRA. Not allowed. However, I did come across something in the annals of brewery history that made me laugh and also intrigued me at the same time. There was once a brewery in Scotland called "Gordon and Blair", which closed in 1953. To mark the changing of the Prime Minister, I have managed to acquire a mint condition beer bottle label from that very brewery. (see picture left) I'll part with it to anyone who wants it for a reasonable sum, with half the proceeds going towards CAMRA funds. (Read helping with beer festival costs...) Highest bid after 30th September wins it. Bid via the editor on editor@mkcamra.org.uk please.

Catch you at the festival, I hope.

Chris

Beer Styles continued

band, with Best Bitter 4% upwards; but a number of brewers label their ordinary Bitters 'Best'. A further development of Bitter came in the shape of Extra or Special Strong Bitters of 5% or more: familiar examples of this style include Fuller's ESB and Greene King Abbot. With ordinary Bitter, look for a spicy, peppery and grassy hop character, a

powerful bitterness, tangy fruit and juicy and nutty malt. With Best and Strong Bitters, malt and fruit character will tend to dominate but hop aroma and bitterness are still crucial to the style, often achieved by 'late hopping' in the brewery or by 'dry hopping' - adding hops to casks as they leave for pubs.

Light ale, also called light bitter, is an interesting subdivision of bitter and is usually defined as any bitter with an ABV of 3.4% or lower, or an original gravity (OG) of 1034 or lower. Light bitters tend also to be lighter in colour than stronger bitters. Originally they were most prevalent in the West Country, where they were colloquially known as Boys' Bitters. Other names that have been used over the years are Family Ales or Luncheon Ales.

Recent years have seen a reduction in the number of traditional West Country light bitters, most notably the tragic demise of Palmer's Bridport Bitter, although St Austell IPA and Arkells 2B still fly the flag. Other parts of the country have seen the reintroduction of lower strength family ales such as Weltons Pride and Joy, mainly from small independent brewers.

Since the 1980s, brewers have attempted to win back younger drinkers from heavily-promoted lager brands with pale, well-hopped and quenching bitters called golden ales. The style is hardly new, the classic example being Boddington's Bitter; but these beers really took off in the 80s with such iconic brands as Exmoor Gold, Hop Back Summer Lightning, and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. Strengths range from 3.5% to 5.3%, and the hallmark is a biscuity and juicy malt character derived from pale malts, underscored by tart citrus fruit and peppery hops, often with hints of vanilla and cornflower. Golden ales are pale amber, gold, yellow or straw coloured and above all, such beers are quenching and served cool, so ideal for summer quaffing. Many use American hop varieties with their characteristic citrus flavours, causing some disapproving traditionalists to dismiss the style as 'grapefruit beer!' Local golden ales include Tring Brewery's Side Pocket for a Toad (yes, that really is the name of a beer!) and Hook Norton's Hooky Gold, but perhaps the defining example of the style is Oakham JHB.

This almost concludes our series on Beer Styles. In the next issue we will finish with a look at the warming ales for damp Autumn and cold Winter.

Diary Dates

Please note that this diary information is always subject to change – check online for latest information at <http://www.mkcamra.org.uk/diary.htm>.

Landlords and regulars - please notify the editor by the end of October to get your events entered in this diary in the next issue; and again a few days in advance of the event itself, if you want us to send a reminder message to our e-mail list.

☒: Items marked with a ☒ symbol are 'official' CAMRA events.

Repeating Events

Every Weds Evening

Live Music Jam Session - The Cannon, Newport Pagnell
<http://www.cannonlive.org.uk>

Every Thurs Evening

Live Acoustic Music night - The Kingfisher, Newport Pagnell

Aug 2007 Bank Holiday Weekend Festivals

Thurs 30th 20:00 Social Meeting ☒

Old Mill, Newton Blossomville

Sept 2007

Mon 10th 20:00 Branch Meeting ☒

The Cannon, Newport Pagnell

Mon 24th 20:00 GBG 2008 Launch ☒

tba – see www.mkcamra.org.uk

Oct 2007 CAMRA National Cider Month

Weds 3rd 16:00-23:00, Bedford Beer Festival ☒

Corn Exchange, St Paul's Sq., Beds

See www.northbedscamra.org.uk

Thurs 4th 11:30-23:00

Fri 5th 11:30-23:00

Sat 6th 11:30-23:00

Mon 8th 20:00 Branch Meeting ☒

Victoria Inn, Bradwell Village

Thurs 25th 12:00-23:00

Our very own ...

Milton Keynes Beer Festival ☒

The Pitz, Woughton Centre, Rainbow Drive, Leadenhall

– see www.mkcamra.org.uk

Thurs 25th 12:00-23:00

Fri 26th 12:00-00:00

Sat 27th 12:00-23:00

Nov 2007

Tues 6th 20:00 Branch Meeting ☒

Old Beams, Shenley Lodge

Fri 23rd 20:00 Social meeting ☒

Cross Keys, Woolstone

Feature

CAKES AND REAL ALE IN PAGAN RITUAL

By LameWolf (aided and abetted by Peter Comber, who kept her supplied with "inspiration").

Everyone is surely familiar with the phrase "Cakes and Ale" – but not everyone is aware that it is an intrinsic part of Pagan ritual. And of course, using real ale is favourite with this particular Pagan!

A thought – for those of you familiar with Terry Pratchett's "Discworld" books, I have to wonder if the wizards at the Unseen University drink unreal ale... for any readers of Tad Williams' "Otherland" series, which is set mainly in cyberspace, what about virtual ale...

But I digress... There are eight major Pagan sun festivals throughout the year, and it occurred to me to find suitable real ales to go with the cakes traditionally eaten at these times.

YULE is the Winter Solstice, the time of rebirth and renewal during winter. The traditional cake for this time is the Yule Log, which could be a chocolate Swiss roll, covered in delicious dark chocolate, made to look like the bark of the log. I would suggest maybe Theakstons "Old Peculiar" (just right for a slightly poty – I mean potty – older relative). Possibly "Black Sheep", from the Black Sheep Brewery would be a good choice, it being the longest night of the year, or to get in the mood for Christmas, how about Hook Norton Brewery's "Twelve Days". But don't have too much of the Christmas spirit, or "Tanglefoot" (Badger Brewery) may be more appropriate!

IMBOLC, the Festival of Light, on February 2nd, is to encourage the sun to return. Candle cake is the food of choice – a circular cake with small white candles around the top, one for each person present. An obvious choice of real ale is "First Light" (Hook Norton), as is Crouch Vale Brewery's "Snow Drop"; as flowers attract bees, how about "Waggle Dance" from Young's Brewery. But remember, it's still cold outside, so watch out for Fullers "Jack Frost".

OESTARA, the start of spring, is the Spring Equinox, and is where the word Easter comes from. Simnel cake is usually consumed at this time, often decorated with little marzipan eggs. So what could be more appropriate than Morland "Speckled Hen"?

Or maybe some springtime "Honey Dew" (Fullers). Many Pagans perform rituals skyclad (nude), so just for them, I suggest "Naked Gold" from Charles Wells. But if you don't fancy baring all, or your pocket won't quite manage gold, Hook Norton Brewery produce "Copper Ale".

BELTANE is next –celebrating the return of fertility to the earth - starting on the evening of April 30th and running on throughout May 1st. Elderflowers are in season, which can be made into elderflower fritters - the heads can be dipped in beaten egg and flour, deep fried and served with caster sugar and cream. If traditional dancing round the maypole is to take place, "Maypole Axed" from Hop Back Brewery is an obvious choice – and to provide the music, perhaps Wychwood Brewery's "Fiddlers Elbow". With the maypole being a phallic symbol, it occurred to me to suggest "Ram Rod" (Young's), and as for Shepherd Neame's "Bishops Finger" - hey don't even think of going there!!

We shall move swiftly on to **LITHA**, the Summer Solstice – "golden" foods are the order of the day - oranges, carrots (think carrot cake!) and bread baked in the shape of the sun. Real ale of choice is Charles Wells "Summer Solstice", and Vale Brewery's "Halcyon Daze", or possibly Hop Back's "Druids Draught" (you never can get those Druids to shut the door after themselves!) For the longest day, I also suggest "Golden Sheep" from the Black Sheep Brewery.

LUGHNASSADH (also called **LAMMAS**) is on August 1st. This is the time of the first harvest, traditionally celebrated with home-baked bread. (The artistically inclined may choose to make bread plaits). A wonderful real ale for this time is Badger Brewery's "Golden Glory" – a personal favourite (or as Peter would say, "Yum!") Try also "Golden Pride" (Fullers), or maybe "Haymaker" (Hook Norton). For any arable farmers among us, how about Hop Back's "Crop Circle".

The Autumn Equinox sees the second harvest – **MABON**. Home-grown fruit is readily available, and can be blended with sponge cake, to create

fruit cobbler. In another tribute to the farmers, I suggest Wychwood Brewery's "Circle Master", an organic ale. More real ales on a "golden" theme which seem appropriate are "Archers Golden" (Archers Brewery), and "Golden Champion" from Badger Brewery. And of course, we've come a long way through the year by now – time is "Steaming On" (Hook Norton).

Finally, we reach **SAMHAIN**, better known as Hallowe'en, on October 31st. If you are making a Jack-o-Lantern, use the scooped out flesh of the pumpkin to make pumpkin pie. Fortune cookies can offer a light-hearted and uncomplicated glimpse of the future. An obvious real ale to choose is Wychwood Brewery's "Black Wych", or you might like "Hobgoblin" (also Wychwood brewery). If you get any trouble from Young's "Old Nick", you could always feed him "Dogs Bollocks" (Wychwood again).

The wheel of the year has now turned full circle. I leave you with the traditional leavetaking -

Blessed Be!

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Milton Keynes & N.Bucks CAMRA P.O.T.Y

THE ROBIN HOOD

Our 2006 Pub of The Year (POTY), as I hope many of our readers will remember, was The Cannon in Newport Pagnell. This year, its worthy successor to the annual accolade of the branch is the Robin Hood, a Free House in a much more rural setting. Situated in the heart of the North Buckinghamshire countryside, along the beautiful Ouse Valley, lies the picturesque village of Clifton Reynes, with its quaint cottages and period houses - and central amongst those houses is The Robin Hood.



Clifton Reynes is a small village a little way South-east of Olney. Its pub has a long history - the first recorded landlord was one Thomas Barnes, in 1577. Mind you, local historians reckon that there was an inn here before that date. Much of the current building still dates back to the 17th century. The pub has not always had this name; the first recorded name was The Rising Sun, in 1770; then some 50 years later, in 1825, it became the Carpenters Arms. Before the middle of the 19th century, it was renamed again as the Robin Hood and Little John, although it has no obvious connection to Sherwood Forest; and a mere 120 years ago Little John vanished and left his friend to guard the establishment by himself.

Now, why do we think this pub is worthy of being voted best in our area for the year? This is no easy decision, and as a branch we put significant effort

into evaluating the best pubs in our area for this accolade each year (It's a dreadful job, but someone has to do it). The final choice is no criticism of the other excellent pubs in our patch who cannot share the award, as the competition is always extremely close.

The most important factor, of course, is that the quality and condition of the beer served is consistently excellent. Having a very large number of Real Ales on the bar is not the most important thing, it's the quality - and above all consistent quality - that counts. And here, Reg and his wife Lyn have earned the award fair and square. Although the pub stocks only three Real Ales (Greene King IPA and Abbot, and a regularly changing guest), they are consistently presented in tip-top condition.

I have a personal opinion about the importance of this aspect of the business - much as we CAMRA members might regret to admit it, it's really not impossible for a good landlord (or landlady, of course) to run a busy, successful and friendly pub



without even offering Real Ale. And there's no question that to present Real Ale at a consistently high standard takes a significant amount of hard work; proper beer is a highly perishable product, and its care is no easy job. The landlord who is prepared to go to that extra trouble over their beer is, in my opinion, the sort of person who will also take trouble over every other aspect of their business; in short, a pub where the beer is really good is almost always one where everything else is at a high standard.

To confirm that opinion, the Robin Hood has a splendid breadth of facilities. The menu is imaginative and varied, and is very good value for money; but Reg is very firm that this will always be a pub that does good food, not a restaurant that sells beer - and to demonstrate this, there's a good range of sandwiches and the usual (and some unusual) crisps, nuts, etc., in addition to the 'proper' meals. The 1 1/2 acre garden has a good assortment of children's play equipment around it, as

well as lots of clean grass for the little dears to run around on; and there are plenty of outside tables for fair weather. A huge 4x4-metre umbrella was donated as a smokers' shelter by Krüsovice, the Czech lager, of which the Robin Hood is currently the only English stockist. One customer remarked to Reg that this shelter was larger than his own garden! There is also a pleasant conservatory (visible in the garden photograph) which is the primary dining area.

As well as the real ales and the Krüsovice lager, Reg and Lyn stock a good range of other beers and lagers, as well as wines, and a wide assortment of soft drinks for those who prefer them (and, of course, for Designated Drivers!)

Reg is a member of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club, and runs an annual Vintage and Classic bike weekend. And on Wednesday evenings an impressive (and beautifully looked-after) range of classic bikes can usually be seen ranged outside the premises.

I asked Reg and Lyn about how the smoking ban had affected them. Reg (a smoker himself) admitted that he was surprised that it seemed not to have damaged business at all, and that he was seeing quite a lot of new faces of late ("pub virgins" in many cases). His feeling was that many ladies were much more willing to accompany their menfolk to the pub now that they could come home without their clothes smelling of stale cigarette smoke. And Reg himself admitted that coming down from his private premises upstairs through the door into the clean air of the pub in the morning was a pleasant experience, even to him.

Immediately after the ban, Reg and Lyn took the brave decision to close the pub completely for a week to give it a complete refurbishment - and the new carpets, fresh paintwork and a general 'going-over' have made it a very clean and pleasant place to spend an hour or two and enjoy some really first-class beer, great food and friendly company.

The pub's website at www.therobinhoodpub.co.uk gives more detail, including a downloadable copy of the current menu.



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FEATURE THE CONCRETE COW BREWERY

...and now, the news every ale fan in Milton Keynes has been waiting for! Yes, it has happened at last! Milton Keynes now (if it's all gone according to plan...) has its very own micro brewery.

The name of the new venture is 'The Concrete Cow Brewery', and it has been set up in an industrial unit near Bradwell Abbey. Head Brewer (and the man who does everything else as he's running it on his own...) is Dan Bonner. The brewery plant itself went in during mid-August, and is a 5.5 barrel length set up. For those unfamiliar with brewery terminology, a barrel = 36 gallons, so Dan's brewery is 198 gallons capacity. That's 1584 pints for each brew.

The brewery equipment has been supplied and set up by Porter's of Lancashire, who have done more than 50 of these around the UK.

If you have been out and about lately, you may well have seen (or even tried) one of Dan's beers already.

They should be available from time to time in most of our friendly Free Houses around Milton Keynes.

Dan tells me he has some good names ready for his beers, and all with some sort of local theme. The launch beer is Midsummer Ale at a strength of 3.8%; this is in the golden style and is a refreshing, easy drinking ale for the summer months. Other ales planned include Cock and Bull Story at 4.1%, and Old Bloomer at 4.5%. Further 'specials' will appear in due course. Dan also has plans to bottle the beers so they can be sold through farmers' markets, etc.

Naturally, we at MK and North Bucks CAMRA are excited about having a brewery on 'our patch' at last, and we wish Dan the greatest of success.

If you want to find out more about the Concrete Cow brewery, you can call Dan on 07889-665745, or go to the website at:
www.concretecowbrewery.co.uk.



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CRINGE CORNER

An elderly man started coming to a community-oriented pub. Every evening he came alone and sat alone, but locals noticed he always bought three pints at a time, and were curious to know why.

After a while, the barmaid plucked up the courage to ask. With a sigh the old man explained that he was one of triplets who had been orphaned when quite small, and had been given a strictly religious upbringing in an orphanage run by nuns. His other two brothers had emigrated to Australia and Canada many years ago, and though they had lost touch, he always bought pints for his absent brothers to remind him of when they were together.

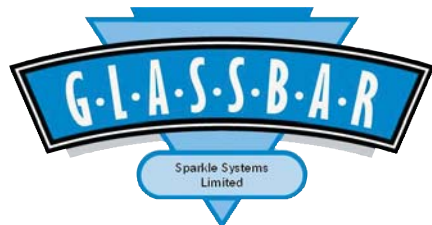
This story spread. The local paper and TV channel got hold of it, and soon everyone knew about the old man who always bought beer for his two absent brothers. People came to the pub to see, and the landlord did rather well out of it.

The one day the old man came into the bar as usual but bought only two pints. The next day he bought only two again, and the next day, and the day after. Of course everyone was wondering why, and they decided that one of the brothers must have died. The landlord thought he might host a highly profitable wake and the local paper prepared a sympathetic 'human interest' article.

So the barmaid went over to the old man and with a sympathetic expression and sorrowful voice said how sorry they all were at the sad loss of the brother.

The old man laughed - 'What are you talking about?' he said 'My brothers are both well. The nuns in the orphanage taught me to give up something for Lent so I've given up beer - but they haven't!'

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FEATURE YOUR PUBS OFFICER NEEDS YOUR HELP

Calling all CAMRA members... and indeed other beer lovers!

Are you aware of the National Beer Scoring Scheme? The idea is to get members' feedback on the quality of the Real Ale that they drink, to help ensure that future Good Beer Guides are accurate. With this in mind, CAMRA created National Beer Scoring Cards, a credit card sized form that you fill in, giving the beer a score from 0-5 (see table), then pass to your Pubs Officer (pubs@mkcamra.org.uk). These cards can (and should) also be used if you visit pubs outside our area; we pass them on to the branch in question for them to use.

You can pick some up at any branch meeting or social, download them to print from the CAMRA website at www.camra.org.uk/catsum.aspx?o=nbss, or fill them in online on our own website at www.mkcamra.org.uk/beerscore.php.

We welcome reports from non-members. Scores submitted by non-members will be verified by a member at the next reasonable opportunity, and then included in the database.

By email, just send me: your name, membership no.

(if a member), survey date, pub name, location, CAMRA area (if known), the beer you drank ... and most importantly, the score you gave it between 0 and 5, as below:

By Peter Comber

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

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Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

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detached and retained this section

Adopting a Pub

Now, for the first time, I know what it is like to live in a village without a pub.

At first I thought it would be annoying but acceptable; a trip to Majestic to stock up on bottled beers, and I would get over it.

Well, it isn't acceptable. It's awful. People I would normally see in the pub, I haven't seen for months. Yes, walking to the excellent Betsey Wynne in neighbouring Swanbourne is good for me, but it won't be so much fun when the winter evenings return.

Our pub, the Green Man in Mursley, closed on 20th March. On the morning of the 21st, the owner arrived to see the pub (for the very first time) and by mid-afternoon it was boarded up for sale.

From that moment I realised that actually knowing who owns your pub is important. Even though a pub is 'just a business', it is more than that to its community. In the same way that a Football Club is much more than a business to the supporters, a local pub is fundamental to village life.

I'm glad to say that it seems that Mursley has some good news; the new owners have submitted plans to the Council for the development of the pub, and a restaurant at the rear. I anticipate reporting in future issues on the opening of the new Green Man.

In Issue Four, the Editor asked members to 'Adopt a Pub'. Having experienced such difficult time, and having seen similar uncertainty in neighbouring villages, I have volunteered to adopt the pubs of our Parish (Mursley, Swanbourne and Little Horwood); and until I can find another local volunteer, Great Horwood.

I will keep an eye on the beer, on the general feel of the pub and report back to our local CAMRA branch. But more than that, suppressing any feeling of reserved English embarrassment, I am going to ask, 'Who actually owns this pub?', and also ask what are their plans for taking the business forward, and how are they engaging with the local community?

Robert Sherriff - CAMRA member
Mursley July 2007



PETER'S PUZZLES!!

1. Peter's favourite tippie is "Blandford Fly" - the 5th most popular bottled real ale in the UK, but with what is it flavoured?
2. Some years ago OG was changed to ABV. To what do these initials refer and what do they stand for?
3. In which area of Milton Keynes is the new Concrete Cow brewery based?
4. If you pay £2.70 for a pint in a normal "brim measure" glass (20oz) and are served one with a head of half an inch, how much (to the nearest 5p) are you paying for the air in the frothy head?
5. What is the only McMullens brewery tied pub in Milton Keynes (recently re-opened)?
6. Approximately (to the nearest 1000) how many pubs are listed in the 2007 edition of CAMRA'S Good Beer Guide?
7. How many different Patron Saints of brewers are there?
8. In the brewing process, what is "sparging" and why is it done?
9. In which decade of last century did Banks & Taylor (of Shefford, Beds) start brewing?
10. Where is Frog Island brewery? Name at least two of their five cask ales.

1. Ginger. 2. Strength of beer, Original Gravity, Alcohol By Volume. 3. Bradwell Abbey (office in Downhead Park). 4. At least 25p. 5. Old Beams. 6. 4,500 pubs, so either 4,000 or 5,000 is acceptable. 7. Twelve. 8. Rinsing the grain bed, with water, to extract as much natural sugar from the grain as possible without removing the tannins. 9. The 1980's (it was 1982). 10. Northampton. Best Bitter (3.8%), Shoemaker (4.2%), Natterjack (4.8%), Fire Bellied Toad (5.0%), and Croak & Stagger (5.6%).

ANSWERS

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