

beer moos

Spring 2007

Issue Three

BEER FESTIVAL RESCUED_(p8)

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

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What do we do as a CAMRA Branch?

Now we are at issue 3 of Beer Moos, we thought it was time to give our readers some information about CAMRA locally and what we get up to. CAMRA is set up with a national structure of branches and it is within this structure that most of the campaigning work goes on.

Our particular branch is called 'Milton Keynes and North Bucks', and in common with all other branches, we look after a defined area and all beer related matters within. Our area is defined as the county boundary lines to the North, East, and West, plus all of Bucks to the south, up to the line of latitude which runs through Steeple Claydon.

The main reason it is done within county boundaries is for the production of CAMRA's flagship publication – The Good Beer Guide (GBG).

So what happens within our branch?

We have a number of regular items that we must cover during the year. The first of these is the selection of entries for the next GBG. The deadline for this is usually the end of March, with the publication date of September. Much work is done in the first 3 months of the year and we never have enough active members to complete all the visits we would like. Over the last year, we have adopted the CAMRA national beer scoring system and this has allowed us to easily focus in on those pubs that serve the best real ale in our branch. (See page 14 for more details on the scoring system.)

One thing that is important to say here is that entry into the GBG is solely based on the quality of the real ale being sold in the pub. It is NOT a good pub guide and no other criteria are used. Furthermore, this also means that ALL real ales on offer must be of superior quality and be consistently so throughout the year.

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CONTINUED FROM P1

What we do (cont'd)

also have to choose a local pub of the year. This has to be done by April each year, and is scored using wider criteria than just the beer quality. The beer quality is important though so current entry in the GBG is pretty much a pre-requisite for the pub of the year (or POTY as it is known).

The branch also undertakes to complete the local reports for CAMRA's annual prices survey. This is done in a one month period in Jan/Feb each year.

There are a number of other things the branch does each year in line with CAMRA's regular national campaigning events. There is the national pubs week (now called Community Pubs Week), each February; the Make May a Mild Month, each May; the Cider Month in the autumn, and of course the GBG launch each September.

Our branch also organises or helps to organise beer festivals. Although we did not have one of our own last year, we hope to do so this year in October. We helped the Winslow Lions launch their beer festival in March 2006; and we are helping again with this event this March. (See diary page and ad in this issue.)

So is there anything that makes our branch a bit special? I have to say "Yes" to that, and I believe that it is that we have a culture of learning as much as we can about real ale and brewing, whilst still enjoying ourselves. Nearly all of the active members have taken and passed the Brewlab/CAMRA taste profiling course. We are therefore well qualified to judge beer quality. Some of our members are even on the CAMRA county tasting panel. Anyone who is qualified can be on this.

There is also a wealth of knowledge about the current and historic real ale scene in the UK. We also have a number of members who know quite a bit about continental beers, especially those from Belgium, and to a lesser extent Germany.

We organise various social events throughout the year, such as brewery visits and visits to pubs in other parts of the country. It is all voluntary what we do, and we will welcome with open arms anyone who wants to become involved.

So that's a little on what we do. We are a quite unusual CAMRA branch: we have the unique new city to look after, as well as some great historical towns and villages.

Sound interesting to you? Why not join CAMRA and join us?

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Moosings from the Chair

If it hasn't already been said to you already, Happy New Year! Another issue is upon us and as normal, I have a few things I'd like to share with you.

Last time, I focussed mostly on my travels, but I haven't been to many places lately, so there is not much to say about that. I did go on a steam train trip to Holyhead – real ale in Holyhead? Forget it!

I did mention about trying some winter ales last time and I managed to get to London, and was lucky to find one or two there. I re-visited some good pubs too. The first one worth mentioning is the Royal Oak, Tabard Street, Borough (not far from London Bridge). This pub is the only Harvey's of Lewes (Sussex) tied house in London. Every winter they have the delicious Old Ale, which is not strong at 4.3%, but is a fine example of a rare style of beer. They also had the Christmas Ale on when I visited, at a whopping 8.2%! Yum!

During the same London trip, I also managed to try Young's Winter Warmer (5.0%), which of course is now brewed down the road in Bedford. Now 'WW', as it's often known, has tended to be a bit variable over the last few years, so it would be wrong to totally judge it on the move to Bedford. It was a disappointment though.

The last port of call before the train home was a pub that I have known as the Jolly Gardeners for years. It is no longer called that and is now known as the 'Bree Louise', and is a stones throw from Euston station, on Coburg Street. This pub is now a bit of a beer exhibition and does beer on both hand pump and gravity. The big highlight for me was the fact they had Adnams Tally Ho (from 7% it says on the pump clip...) on draft. In my opinion, the finest of all of the winter specials, it did not let me down. A return visit a few days later was most enjoyable.

The bad news of course is that you will not be able to try most of these beers until next winter, however, Harvey's Old is usually around until end of April.

So what else is on my mind? Well apart from the fact that this time of year is our busy time in the

branch, with GBG entries for 2008 and the 2007 local pub of the year to be chosen, two things come up. Firstly, you may have noticed that there have been some stories around about the fact that the crown mark has disappeared from our pint and half pint glasses. To put the record straight, this has more to it than just another European directive and is down to a combination of two things - the last stamping office, at Bury in Lancashire, now only approves glasses from small specialised makers, (the last two British glassmakers closed down in 2001), and the fact that European manufacturing standards have improved enough to guarantee all glasses are a pint. Because most of our glasses are brim measure, there will not be anything on the outside of the glass anymore, just the EU quality mark on the bottom.

Most of the scaremongering on this story is saying that we will have to move to litres instead of pints. Perhaps this will come one day? I hope not. Think there might be a bit of a hoo-ha if that happens.

The next thing to get me going is the constant moaning about binge drinking. Whilst everyone should be responsible about their consumption, I feel that the part the brewers and retailers are playing is not being looked at enough. Did you know that 25 or so years ago, most beers were around 4% and below? Only a couple of dozen or so were above that, and a 5% or more beer available all year round was quite a rarity. Fullers ESB and Ruddell's County were 2 of the more common ones.

More evidence is easily found on bottles of Landlord, from Timothy Taylor's (available in most supermarkets.) Landlord is one of THE superior beers in the UK, but the bottle clearly states 'Strong Ale', at 4.1%! (The draft version is 4.3%). Another thing that not many people are aware of is that the strength of ordinary lager in the UK has increased over the years, with most coming in at nearly 5%. Most used to be around the 3.5% mark.

It therefore doesn't take much to work out that we are all being increasingly limited to stronger beers.

It's no wonder that younger people can't cope, and that's ignoring Alcopops and shots etc, which are another story. So where does this all leave us? Ask your local to stock lower ABV beers so you have a choice. We in CAMRA devote the month of May to raising awareness of mild ales (which are often, but not necessarily, lower in alcohol) and low gravity bitters, and we'll be having an event or two. See the diary dates for details. Incidentally, by 'low gravity' we mean beers that end up with an ABV of 3.4% or below. In days gone by, these bitters were known as 'Boy's Bitters'. I leave you all to work out why...

One last thing on this, why do I think the brewers and retailers are in some way to blame? Higher strength beers are 'premium products', which means they can command premium prices, therefore more profit.

I'm going to go off and do some GBG surveys now, thanks for reading, and if you have any comments on what I've said, let me know via the editor please.

Cheers!

Chris



PETER'S PUZZ LES!!

1. What is the difference between whisky and whiskey?
2. Who, in the production of beer products, has traditionally worked wearing stilts?
3. What name is given to the water used to produce beer?
4. Which beer used to use the slogan "A works wonders"?
5. What is unique about the brewing process used by Marstons at Burton-on-Trent?
6. Complete these local pub names, with one word in each case, and state where each is located:
a) North b) Mow c) Nut &
d) The Eight e) The Eager
7. In which town is CAMRA head office located?
8. What is the reason given that every pint should now be served in a clean glass - even when a drinker requests the same glass?
9. From where does the surname Brewster originate?
10. What is the correct name for the crimped metal bottle caps on beer?

female brewer. 10. Crown Cork.
(straight from the cask) does not require this. 9. A
immersed in the poured beer. Gravity dispense
contamination by the swan neck spout when it is
7. St Albans. 8. ECC regulations: to prevent cross
Eight Belles (Bletchley). 6e. Eager Poet (Neath Hill).
also Bedford). 6c. Nut & Squirrel (Westcroft). 6d.
Western (Wolverton). 6b. Barley Mow (Cosgrove,
barrels rather than large vessels or vats. 6a. North
tion - where the beer is brewed in individual
still using the "Burton Union" method of fermenta-
(brewed by Ind Coope). 5. It is the only brewery
pickers in Kent. 3. Liquor. 4. Double Diamond
Whiskey is mainly Irish or North American. 2. Hop
ANSWERS 1. Whisky is only produced in Scotland.

It's here again!

Winslow Beer Festival 2007

Winslow Public Hall
Sessions: 6-11pm on Friday 24th March
11am - 4pm and 6-11pm on Saturday 25th March 2007

Tickets £10
to include £5-worth of the beers of your choice, plus
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FOOD AVAILABLE

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Organised by The Lions Club of Winslow
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www.winslowlions.org.uk

Diary Dates

Please note that this diary information is always subject to change – check online for latest information at www.mkcamra.org.uk/diary.php.

Landlords and regulars - *please notify the editor by the end of April to get your events entered in this diary in the next issue; and also 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 Tues Evening

Steak Night - £2 per pint, free glass of Rioja with steak Lowndes Arms Hotel, Whaddon
www.lowndesarms.co.uk

Every Weds Evening

Live Music Jam Session
The Cannon, Newport Pagnell
www.cannonlive.org.uk

Every Thurs Evening

Live Acoustic Music night
The Kingfisher, Newport Pagnell

Throughout May - Mild Month

Several pubs will be featuring Draught Mild as well as Bitters – check your local, or our website, for details


February 2007

Monday 5th - 20:00


Branch Meeting  White Hart, Sherington

17th-24th Community Pubs Week

Saturday 17th 11:30 to 16:30(ish)

Cycle Pub Crawl  (6 pubs)
Start & finish at the Ship Ashore, Willen.
See www.mkcamra.org.uk/bike.php.

Tuesday 20th - 20:00

Two-pub Social Evening 
The Bull, Olney, continuing to The Swan, Olney

March 2007

Monday 5th - 20:00

Branch Meeting  Swan, Middleton
(Milton Keynes Village)

Weds 14th - Sat 17th

Leicester Beer Festival

Bay Street, Leicester.

see www.leicestercamra.org.uk/festivals.shtml
for details

Thursday 22nd - 20:00

Social Meeting  Old Green Man, Little Brickhill

Fri 23rd - Sat 24th 18.00 - 23.00

Winslow Lions beer festival


Winslow Public Hall – see www.winslowlions.org.uk

April 2007

Thursday 5th - 20:00

Social Meeting  The Lowndes Arms, Whaddon

Monday 16th - 20:00

Branch AGM  Back Function Room at
The Cannon, Newport Pagnell


May 2007 CAMRA

"Mild Month"

Sat 5th - Mon 7th Normal Opening Hours

"Beer & Bangers" Festival (with Morris Dancing on Sat pm) White Hart, Sherington.

Sunday 6th Afternoon

Social Meeting at B&B Festival 
White Hart, Sherington

Monday 7th - 20:00

Social Meeting  The Cannon, Newport Pagnell

Sunday 20th - All Day


Tippelfair - Collectors' Heaven Woughton Centre
Contact pete@tipples.net for details

Monday 21st - 20.00

Branch meeting  Cowper's Oak, Weston Underwood

July 2007

TBA

Boxmoor Beer Festival  Camelot Rugby Club,
Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead

What's in a Name?

Doom Bar

A 4.3% ale, this comes from Sharp's Brewery in Cornwall.

The original Doom Bar is an infamous sandbank at the mouth of the Camel Estuary in North Cornwall, which has stranded or even shipwrecked unsuspecting mariners over the years.

Safer, perhaps, to stay in the pub and just look at the water.....



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Beer Festival Rescued? We Hope so!

As readers of Issue Two of Beer Moos will know, we were forced to cancel our 2006 Beer festival, due to lack of a suitable venue.

However, we are glad to be able to tell you that it looks as though the festival will be back on the tracks for 2007; we have a potential venue lined up, and if all goes according to plan, we will have a festival in October, at a well-known Milton Keynes venue.

In the meantime, readers who are looking for a good beer festival in our area can try the Winslow Lions festival, which takes place in Winslow Public Hall (surprise!) on 23rd-24th March 2007. See <http://www.winslowlions.org.uk/beerfestival.htm> for further details.

We as a branch have provided some specific assistance to The Lions to help make this festival a success, and we hope it raises "loadsamoney" for all the good causes that The Lions espouse.



Have Your Say!

We welcome input from readers – if you have anything that you'd like to share with other beer drinkers in our area via these pages, please email it to editor@mkcamra.org.uk, or by post to me at 23 Butlers Grove, Great Linford MK14 5DT. And of course we really do want pub reviews, all the time – see Page 14.

This issue, we have featured a bus-based pub crawl supplied by Mick Furn, a member of Northants branch. Recommended "crawls" in our area are certainly of interest, especially if they can be managed by public transport or Shanks' Pony.

Another thing we'd be very interested to see is pictures of unusual, interesting or closed-down pubs, or related things – for instance, signage painted on a gable end that indicates that a premises was once a pub. I can't guarantee that every picture will be used, but I can guarantee that they won't be printed if I don't get them!

We have in fact already received a letter to the editor; unfortunately, space precludes our publishing it in this issue. You may like to visit the writer's website at <http://ken.croucher.users.btopenworld.com/>, where he describes his (quite impressive) home brewery.

STOP PRESS NEW PUB OPENS

A new pub has opened in Swanbourne, called the Betsey Wynne. It is a true Free House, and has been built from scratch. It was by consulting the local people that this has come about, as the past pub in the village (the Swan) was lost some 15 years ago.

Our chairman visited the pub recently, and said: "It is very, very good. The beers on were Hooky Bitter and Landlord. I scored both at 4 [out of 5 - a very good ranking -Ed]. I also spoke to the manager, who intends to have another real ale on when the time is right. I also talked about local beers, as they are sourcing all of their food locally under Defra rules."

Tasting Beer

I thought I'd write a small article to let you know about tasting beer 'officially'

'Officially'??? What on earth does that mean?

The answer is easy – not only am I Chairman of your local CAMRA branch, I am also, (and proud to be so) Chairman of the CAMRA Buckinghamshire Tasting Panel.

All regions in CAMRA have tasting panels, some of these (as in our case) being broken down into counties. We are in Central Southern region, which includes the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

The purpose of these panels is to regularly taste local beers for quality, and the members do this only on beers within their area. We have 4 qualifying breweries in Bucks – Chiltern, Oxfordshire Ales (they are in Bucks!), Rebellion, and Vale. The purpose of tasting these beers is to find a winner in each of a number of categories to be put forward for consideration in the Champion Beer of Britain competition, held annually, at the start of the Great British Beer Festival. We also put beers forward for the Winter CBOB.

How to you get to be on one of these panels? The only real criterion (as there are not many volunteers), is that you have to pass a taste profiling course. I am also proud to say that we, here in MK, have been involved with taste profiling before the Central Southern tasting panel came to be put together. We have always run an event for our beer festival helpers that are interested each year, before the festival.

This all means that we have quite a few qualified tasters here in MK. (We do therefore know what we are talking about...)

If you are a local member, why not join the tasting panel? If you are not a CAMRA member, but find this aspect of what CAMRA does fascinating, why not join us and enjoy?

Lastly, you may be interested to know that we recently ran a tasting event for one of the pubs in the area, to help train their staff. If you'd like something similar, or even if you'd like a corporate event on similar lines, why not get in touch to discuss details?

Happy tasting!



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DARK, DELICIOUS AND SOMETIMES DEADLY!

more about beer types - Stout and Porter



A noted Stout House in Charlton, now closed.

In the last issue of Beer Moos we looked at the difference between ale and lager. In this issue and those following, we'll go in more detail into the wonderful and diverse world of ale. As February and March have been designated by CAMRA nationally as Porter and Stout months, we'll describe these members of the dark beer family below, and leave other ales for Beer Moos numbers 4 and 5.

Porter was a London style of ale that turned

the brewing industry upside down early in the 18th century. It was a dark brown beer – 19th-century versions became jet black – that was originally a blend of brown ale, pale ale and 'stale' or well-matured ale. It acquired the name 'porter' as a result of its popularity among London's street-market workers. At the time, a generic term for the strongest or 'stoutest' beer in a brewery was stout. The strongest versions of porter therefore became known as stout porter, shortened over the years to just stout.

These beers were strong – 6% for porter, 7% or 8% for stout – and proved very popular, not just on the British mainland, but over in Ireland as well. Such vast quantities of Porter and Stout flooded into Ireland from London and Bristol, that a Dublin brewer named Arthur Guinness decided to cash in, and fashion his own interpretation of

the style. He blended unmalted roasted barley into the recipe, and in so doing produced a style known as Dry Irish Stout.

Thus Guinness was born.

Restrictions on making roasted malts in Britain during World War One led to the demise of UK-brewed porter and stout, and left the market to the Irish. Sadly Guinness served on draught in British pubs is pasteurised and served under mixed-gas pressure, so does not count as Real Ale. In recent years however, smaller craft brewers in Britain have rekindled an interest in the style, and created a tempting variety of real stouts, though in keeping with modern drinking habits, strengths have been reduced. Flavours haven't though – look for profound dark and roasted malt character with raisin and sultana fruit, espresso or cappuccino coffee, liquorice and molasses, all underscored by hefty hop bitterness. Stouts can be dry or sweet and range from 4% to 8% ABV. Locally brewed examples include Hook Norton Double Stout and B&T Edwin Taylor Extra, both excellent. Porters are complex in flavour, range from 4% to 6.5% and are typically black or dark brown. A delicious example of a porter is Buntingford Night Owl, which was voted runner-up Beer of the Festival at Milton Keynes Beer Festival 2005.

Porter and Stout are only two examples of the dark ale style. In the next issue of Beer Moos we'll take a look at the others – Barley Wine, Old Ale, and Mild – in time for May which is CAMRA's Mild Month. In the summer issue we'll take a tour round their lighter cousins – bitters, IPAs and golden ales. So, for now,

Cheers!

FEATURE

GBG Listed Pubs: Using the X5 Service Oxford to Cambridge

In order to take this journey and cover all pubs that have been included in the both Good Beer Guides of 2006/7 it would possibly take a 2-3 day journey in either direction, although ticket-wise it's cheaper to buy a Gold Rider ticket which would cover a week but would be cheaper than separate journeys. You can use a Stagecoach Explorer ticket, costing £6 if bought on a Stagecoach bus in Oxfordshire, but £8 on Stagecoach East.

Pubs listed are on the route of the bus. It runs roughly every 30 minutes (but check the timetable at www.scbeastmidstravel.co.uk/X5Timetable.html). This service also has a toilet facility.

Location	Pubs
Oxford	Far from Madding Crowd; Lamb & Flag; Eagle & Child; Rose & Crown
Bicester	Swan Inn; Penny Black
Buckingham	Mitre; Woolpack
Milton Keynes	Victoria Inn Bradwell (this requires a Wolverton-bound No. 2 MK Metro to reach pub)
Bedford	Cricketers Arms; Phoenix; Wellington Arms
Great Barford	Anchor Inn
St Neots	Woolpack
Cambridge <i>*most of the city pubs close early; very few stay open all day</i>	Cambridge Blue; Free Press; Champion of the Thames; St Radegund.

Compiled by Mick Furn, Northamptonshire Branch
CAMRA member



CRINGE CORNER

The drinker at the bar was very well oiled. He swayed on his bar stool, hiccupped, slurped and spilt his beer, slurred his words. Finally the publican came over and said 'You've had enough, mate - hop it!'

The guy didn't argue. He got off his stool but promptly fell on the floor. Looking around, he pulled himself up by a pillar, took another step or so, then crash! - back on the floor. This continued every few steps as he staggered out on the street, hauling himself up on lamp-posts, window-ledges, anything he could get hold of, and falling down again every time - till he reached his front door, which fortunately was not far away.

The house was dark - his wife must have gone to bed. Somehow he managed to pull himself up, slide the key in, open the door, and close it quietly - before landing face-down on the hall carpet. Trying to keep quiet so as not to wake his wife and get the inevitable lecture, he crawled up the stairs, found the spare bedroom, hauled himself into the bed and soon was out cold. 'At least she didn't hear me!' was his last thought.

But in the morning, there she was, standing by his bed with a cup of tea and disapproving expression.

'You had a skinful last night!' she said accusingly.

'I know, ' the guy admitted, 'and now I've got a hangover to prove it. But how did you find out?'

His wife grinned. 'The pub phoned - you left your wheelchair in the bar!'

By the way, in case anyone feels this joke is in poor taste - one of our committee members uses a wheelchair, and she thought it was hilarious!

In Search of Real Ale on Guernsey

September 13th saw Peter and myself board an Aurigny Airlines turboprop aircraft, armed with information from the 2006 Good Beer Guide, heading for the beautiful Channel Island of Guernsey.

Our first port of call pubwise was the Venture Inn, in the parish of Forest. What a disappointment! It seems the new management have done away with draught Real Ale. They did have Randalls Evil and Wicked in bottles though, so we didn't go thirsty. Quite rightly, this pub is not in the 2007 edition.

We had been told the Fleur Du Jardin at Castel was a pleasant venue, and it was also a GBG entry, so the following day we headed for there. We had not heard of the Jersey Brewery before, but found their summer ale Guernsey Sunbeam to be eminently quaffable.

Later, a trip to the Ambassador Hotel, St Martins, gave us our first taste of Randalls Patois, which we gather, is "the" local draught ale. We also bumped into another Camra member, Shaun, the treasurer of Vale of White Horse branch, who was staying at the Ambassador. Small world, indeed!

The following day saw us at La Fontaine, St Sampsons. Not a prepossessing looking place, but well worth the visit. Randalls Envy and Guilty were on offer, and both were eminently quaffable. Incidentally, I gather that Randalls Cynful is named for the landlady of this pub, Cindy.

Our next port of call was the Captains Hotel, St Martins, very much the locals' watering hole. The only Real Ale available was Fullers London Pride, but it was in good form, disproving the rumour that it doesn't travel well.

On to the Rock Mount Hotel, Cobo. It was Sunday lunchtime when we visited, and it was very much a carvery type venue. Very busy, with a lot of families having their Sunday dinner. We enjoyed Randalls Patois and some very filling sandwiches!

A couple of venues in St Peter Port were next; firstly the Ship and Crown, which we were not so

impressed with. The beer, (we had Timothy Taylors Landlord), whilst perfectly good, was not as outstanding as one would wish for in a GBG listed pub. Also we felt the music was too loud; maybe we're getting to be old fogeys, but we like to actually talk to each other over our pints.

Our final pub, the Cock and Bull, was another story. Four Real Ales; three from Ringwood (Best Bitter, Fortyniner and Boondoggle), plus Crouch Vale Golden Duck. We sampled all four, and found them all to be spot on. There were also tasting notes available, and we were pleased and surprised to learn that earlier in the month they had had a selection of ales from Tring Brewery. All in all, an excellent end to our GBG pub crawl round the island.

We were unable to visit Cornerstones Cafe, as it was simply not possible to park within sensible wheelchair pushing distance the day we tried, and the sea was a little too rough for a visit to the Mermaid Tavern on Herm - although I note this is not in the 2007 Guide. Hopefully we shall return before too long and visit the ones we missed, and other new GBG entries.



Fleur Du Jardin

Join CAMRA Today...

Just fill in the form below and send with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd).

All forms should be addressed to membership secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW. Alternatively, you can join online at www.camra.org.uk. Rates for single membership are £18 and joint £21. Concession rates are available on request.

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I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association

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Applications will be processed within 21 days

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.

Grainstore Brewery Trip Report

One of the many nice things about drinking real ale is that every beer is different. Indeed, it's that variety that contrasts so agreeably with the bland uniformity of processed beers. What's perhaps not so well-known is that every brewery is different, too. That's why so many CAMRA members and their friends enjoy seeing where their beer is made, so on Saturday Oct 14th a merry group set off from Milton Keynes to the award-winning Grainstore Brewery at Oakham, in Rutland.

The brewery itself is a converted grain store (hence the name!) next to Oakham station. On arrival we were greeted by the head brewer who, after showing us a DVD of the brewing process, led us on a most informative tour. There were three stories of the old grain store building, and they have used this to recreate a traditional gravity-fed tower brewery. Unfortunately, this design means that the brewery itself is inaccessible to the disabled, although the

ground floor visitor centre and brewery tap is disabled-friendly.

Whilst some breweries boast sparkling new computer-controlled equipment, and others brew in vats dating from Victorian times, Grainstore has made a brewery literally out of scrap. Every item was acquired second-hand, and most were originally for industrial or dairy use. The heavier items - and a big vat of ale is not light - hang from the girders rather than sit on the floors, which were strong enough for sacks of stored grain, but not for large steel tanks of fermenting wort!

Grainstore produce four regular ales (including the 2005 Champion Beer of Britain, Rutland Panther), a delicious dark mild, plus six seasonals and one brewed under contract for a Leicester pub.

After a walk/crawl around Oakham it was back to the Grainstore for one (or three) for the road before piling aboard our comfortable (and thankfully toilet-equipped) coach for the trip home.

But not straight home. Six of our party had joined us at Kettering so, as we had to go there anyway, it seemed such a shame not to look in at the Alexandra Arms, Kettering's real-ale showcase, home to Nobby's brewery and the local CAMRA branch's Pub of the Year 2005. So we spent a convivial hour there, then it was homeward bound for real.

Altogether this was a great day out. We were joined by friends from Buckingham, Northampton, and Kettering as well as Milton Keynes, and I'd like to thank them all for coming. Brewery trips are great fun, and we do them fairly regularly. So - keep checking the Diary page in Beer Moos and, next time, come along.

Jim Scott, Social Secretary
social@mkcamra.org.uk

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