



beer moos

Spring 2014

Issue Thirty

Our Faces They Are a-Changing!

Or rather, they have a-changed. For, at the Annual General Meeting of Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA branch in late January, an almost entirely new committee was elected. Beer Moos is delighted to introduce the newcomers in (mostly!) their own words.

Chairman

Ken Croucher

Hello to all MK CAMRA members and thanks for entrusting me with chairmanship of your branch!



I've been a member of CAMRA almost since its inception in 1973, yes - a classic 40 year veteran! I've also brewed "real" ales for over 40 years and I know a fair bit about beer brewing, storage, dispense and drinking, both in theory and in practice. My heart has been with CAMRA from the start and as your chair I must and will support all national policies at least in public. However my head absolutely disagrees with some CAMRA dogma and I believe CAMRA needs to make some fundamental changes - but tackling that may be a future role. Put very simply, I want to drink beer that I enjoy, at a value for money price, in pleasant surroundings, regardless of dogma. I care passionately about and will support equally passionately anything that helps me and others achieve it.

Vice-chairman

David Martin

Greetings to all!

I joined CAMRA in the mid 1990s. Having been



brought up in the North East in the early 80s, the then staples were my early education and all were keg-fizz! University in South Yorkshire broadened my horizons with Wards and Stones then I moved to London and found Courage, Fuller's, Young's. A little later I discovered American beers and my world was turned upside down. Big hops, big ABV. Everything at home seemed a bit brown, a bit 4.2%, more than a bit uninspiring.

Move forward nine years and there is real innovation in the market. I like a pint in the pub, I also like a half in new-style bars, drinking higher ABV beers. And I like bottled beer at home, which is often where the real variety comes from.

As a CAMRA committee member I am fervent about beer and enjoyment of it. We must fight to maintain the right to enjoy it in the face of punitive taxation and nanny-state scaremongering. I am passionate too about how we can ensure that CAMRA is relevant to all its members, and not just die-hards blocking the forward thinking that leads to innovation.

Secretary

Steve Brady

I joined CAMRA in the mid-1970's having discovered real ale whilst at university in London. I can still remember my first pint of Young's Bitter and liked it so much I completed the brewery's crawl of all (then) 135 Young's tied houses and am still the proud owner of a Young's 135-Club tie! I've lived in Milton Keynes for 30 years, long enough to witness and appreciate the



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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



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New Chairman's Introduction

Firstly, my thanks to all the outgoing committee members. I hope I am a worthy successor and that I will have their and your support and encouragement going forward. Secondly, my own relationship with CAMRA. Put very simply, I want to drink beer that I enjoy, at a value for money price, in pleasant surroundings, regardless of dogma. I care passionately about and will passionately support anything that helps me and others achieve this. Thirdly, my vision for the future. MK CAMRA, like all such institutions, relies on very generous support and effort from a few activists. I would like us to move to a position where we involve members a bit more and get a bit of support from more of them. To achieve that I'd like to start with a few modest objectives:

1. Clarifying what the branch is trying to do and seeking support from the membership.
2. Improving communication within the branch.
3. I think we could have more social meetings separate from committee meetings. I also think we could use these to undertake some of our other duties - evaluating pubs for Good Beer Guide and Pub of the Year for example.
4. I'm certain there are members who may not want to participate in the formality, responsibility and commitment of the committee, but who would be happy to volunteer at the beer festival and to visit and evaluate a few more pubs.

Please also check out our new Branch Aims on p13.

Ken Croucher

The Lamb
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NEXT ISSUE

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

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great improvement in the local ale scene and rise of local breweries Concrete Cow, Hopping Mad, and Buckingham together with Virtual Orchard cider. That said, my favourite ales are Batham's Bitter from the West Midlands and Loweswater Gold and Heskett Newmarket from the Lake District, together with Gwylt-y-Ddraig cider from Wales, and I drink Tetley Bitter on handpump at my local, the Nag's Head in Great Linford.

I've been a member of MK and North Bucks CAMRA for many years, and have worked regularly at the branch's Concrete Pint beer festivals. Far back in the depths of time I was membership secretary, and when the music stopped at the latest branch AGM found myself clutching the secretarial pen (or keyboard!) Like many 'Camroids' I earn my pint working in IT.

Membership Secretary Ian Dolby



I had my first taste of ale early in my drinking career. It was Webster's keg bitter and after one sip I knew I hated it and would be sticking to lager. Then while a student in Newcastle, lager hit £1 a pint and I was forced to trade down to cider for a few months until disaster struck and the that drink's price reached the same dizzy heights! So financial necessity drove me to revisit that strange dark brew drunk by aged, flat capped Geordies in the then untrendy bars of Bigg Market.

At first I took it easy and stuck to the unthreatening offerings of Federation/Vaux/Newcastle Breweries but one evening a bunch of us headed down to the Quayside where we'd heard a beer festival was gannin' on. I've no idea how many beers I sampled that evening or what they were, but one thing was certain - I was hooked! So here I am, 30 years and countless pints later, still enamoured of the brown nectar, that off-putting first sip of keg Websters far behind me.

I still drink the odd lager or interesting cider but my preference is for the darker real ales though I'm not keen on flavoured beers. I always tell folks that my favourite pint is the next one! However, if pushed I'd have to say (being a Yorkshireman!) that the best pint I've ever had was Timothy Taylor's Ram Tam by an alehouse fire after a freezing trek over the moors. I wouldn't give a XXXX for anything else!

Branch Contact Richard King



Thank you for electing me to the committee of MK CAMRA branch - I am really looking forward to getting involved. This is my first experience in this field so all that I can bring is my love and enjoyment of real and predominantly British beers and ciders. I have been a fan for many years, having cut my teeth as a teenager - thanks Dad. Over the years I have discovered more and

more of these wonderful beers so it seems only natural now for me to take a more proactive role in the support and promotion of our ales, and the guys who brew them with such passion for our enjoyment.

In the last decade we've seen an explosion of micro-brewers. Ale is definitely "trending" at the moment and long may this continue. Real ale is not only extremely enjoyable and incredibly varied, but it's increasingly produced and sold locally by people who have a true passion for what they do. It's this I wish to assist in supporting and promoting, share my enthusiasm and passion for the drink that I love, and help deliver the true meaning and cause of CAMRA. And of course Josh. my faithful guide-dog, will be joining me in this!

Young Persons Coordinator Scott Tomkins



My love of beer started early. My gramps would make me Caffrey's shandies, until one day the lemonade stopped going in. My taste matured from there and at the ripe old age of 18 I discovered pubs and hand pumps. I was a member of the real ale society at university and eventually got round to joining CAMRA in 2011..

I couldn't pick my favourite beer style but tend to gravitate towards golden ale and confess enjoying craft keg beer too. Milton Keynes and North Bucks branch has a lot of positives. We put on a superb beer festival every year; Beer Moos is fine piece of literature (*Editor blushes..*); there are lots of social events on the calendar, and there is an active and passionate committee.

I know there are more young CAMRA members or young soon-to-be CAMRA members out there. Just ask yourselves - will I drink more than 40 pints of real ale in Wetherspoons in a year? Will I visit a couple of beer festivals? Will I be going to London in August for the Great British Beer Festival? I hope you youthful non-members reading this are flicking to the membership form on p14 right now!

Public Transport Officer Jenny Ellway



I discovered that I had a taste for beer as a young child when I took a sip of my Dad's pint in the garden of a village local one summer's evening. It was an Ind Coope pub, so I imagine the beer was Burton Ale or Double Diamond.

My love of beer continued, and when I went for the first time to the Great British Beer Festival I thought I'd died and gone to heaven! On joining CAMRA I attended my local Branch meetings from the start, and served on the committee in North Beds branch as social secretary, then chairman. I was actively involved in the Bedford beer festival each year and also attended socials organised by the surrounding branches, so when I moved to Milton

Keynes in 2000, I was no stranger to the MK branch members. It wasn't long before I became branch chairman and remained in that post for a couple of years. I haven't held another committee post until now, but I have enjoyed attending branch socials and working at the Concrete Pint beer festival.

The position of public transport officer didn't exist when I was last on the committee, but I felt that I could offer something to the post. The role is basically researching and publishing the accessibility of pubs by public transport. I am hoping to find some interesting "Ale Trails" across the MK and North Bucks area.

Regional Director's View



By Nick Boley

So we are into a new year and already it has been very busy CAMRA-wise. My first visit to Milton Keynes for a very long time, for the Milton Keynes and North Bucks branch AGM, was my first responsibility for the year. When a branch is losing most of its committee with no sign of too many people coming forward, this can represent a major challenge for a Regional Director, especially one as inexperienced as me. But as it turned out, what could have been an embarrassing evening turned into a very successful one with nearly all positions filled, and many members coming forward to serve for the first time. So I must welcome new branch chair Ken Croucher and his deputy David Martin and wish them success in their new roles. I have total confidence in them, and all their colleagues.

The following week our first Regional Meeting of the year was held at the Catherine Wheel in Henley-on-Thames. The highlight of the meeting was a talk from Emily Ryans from CAMRA HQ on Assets of Community Value and associated planning issues. I hope branches found this helpful in the never-ending quest to save our pubs. There had been a great deal of flooding in the area and the streets by the river in Henley were VERY wet. The next day the town centre was closed to traffic due to rising floodwater, so we met on the right day.

I also had another NERDs weekend (that's National Executive and Regional Directors for non-CAMRA speakers!) to attend in February, this time in Sunderland.. There were a number of interesting points discussed, including concerns about the number of members participating in the Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) competition vote, and what could be done to improve that situation. The subject of communications also came up, and we all agreed that someone should check memos before issuing them, to ensure they are fit-for-purpose, and not likely to cause concern, upset, or confusion to branches. I must admit I put my hand up to be one of the readers. Just waiting for the deluge.....

Sunderland has some great pubs and we got to visit several. Fitzgerald's, the Isis, the Museum Vaults and - jewel in the crown - the Butcher's Arms are all highly recommended to anyone visiting the city.

But back to more mundane matters. The regional team is now growing, with Reading branch chair Dan Cane-Honeysett now formally deputy Regional Director, and Mike Parker from North Oxfordshire branch is our new Regional Finance Officer. All we need now is a regional Secretary - to organise meetings, take minutes, and keep me in order (the last is perhaps the most difficult). If anyone is interested, or knows someone who would excel in the role, please let me know. As ever, my email address is RD.CentralSouthern@camra.org.uk.

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

Pub News

National Pub of the Year 2013

Lancashire Pub judged Best in Britain

A sleepy village pub has been thrust into the limelight after being named the best in the UK. In an idyllic setting across from a small stream and surrounded by green fields, The Swan with



Two Necks in Pendleton, Lancs, has beat off competition from over 57,000 pubs across the UK to be crowned CAMRA's National Pub of the Year.

Steve Dilworth, landlord of The Swan with Two Necks, said *"We are delighted and proud to have been judged CAMRA's National Pub Of The Year. We've been at The Swan with Two Necks for Twenty Seven Years and think of it as our hidden gem. This is a fantastic achievement not only for ourselves but our dedicated staff - and a great boost for our community."*

CAMRA judges pubs on a variety of criteria such as atmosphere, level of service, value for money and community focus, with extra weighting of course given to the quality of their real ale, cider and perry. Any landlords looking to make their pub the best in Britain might want to take note of Steve's somewhat unorthodox advice on getting the best out of his real ale, as he claims *"Talking to the barrels has finally paid off!"*.

To find the Swan with Two Necks, point your satnav at BB7 1PT.

Branch Pub of the Year the Ship Ashore, Willen

Hard on the heels of the National Pub of the Year (POTY) being announced, CAMRA branches begin nominating their candidates for this year's contest. For 2014 Milton Keynes and



North Bucks branch has chosen the Ship Ashore at Willen. Beer Moos believes that this is the first time an estate pub has won this award and congratulates general manager Richard Bradshaw and his staff on this splendid achievement. We shall be presenting the Pub of the Year certificate on Thursday March 20th at 8pm.

The Ship Ashore now joins other branches' choices through the long process of county and regional POTY selection, culminating in the National choice at the end of this year. Beer Moos will report it all!

News North

Navigation Inn, Cosgrove was closed when last we went to press. Now we're delighted to report it is open again and thriving under the new management of Keith Taylor. Beer Moos wishes Keith and his team every success at this rural canal-side treasure.



Watts Arms, Hanslope is holding a beer festival over Easter Weekend, Thursday 17th - Monday 21st April starting with a quiz on the Thursday evening starting at 8.15pm. They also hope to run a race night sometime during April but have yet to determine the date. Check on 01908 510246 or visit www.thewattsarms.co.uk

News West

Prince George, Tattenhoe is a new-build house that opened in February. It's part of the estate of McMullens brewery in Hertford who also operate the nearby Old Beams at Shenley Lodge. See separate article below.

News South

Bull and Butcher, Fenny Stratford has reopened under new management and was selling Pedigree, Broadside and DoomBar when our spy looked in recently.

Maltsters Fenny Stratford had St Austell Trelawney on handpump when our spy called. This pub is now run by the former licensee of the now-closed Foundry.

Park Hotel, Bletchley is reported to be selling DoomBar

News Central

Black Horse, Great Linford We have heard that they are planning a beer festival but have no more details as we go to press.

New Pub Opens At Tattenhoe

Pubs are closing. On a daily basis. Which is not good news. Yet, here in Milton Keynes, we not only have a pub opening, but a brand new pub opening - the Prince George, in Tattenhoe, launched in February. A new estate pub from McMullens Brewery in Hertford, it is a large



open plan place. Busy on a Saturday lunchtime when Beer Moos visited, with four real ales available, as well as the usual lagers and ciders. Food is a major focus, but the bar occupies a good chunk of the available space. The outdoor seating area is under development and should be completed in time for the traditional long, hot, English summer.

Brewery News

Concrete Cow

The Summer beer, "Cowzat?" was a resounding success and was voted 2nd at the MK & North Bucks Concrete Pint Beer Festival, which was very well organised and attended as usual. However it can't be brewed again until the new season's hops arrive early next year (but that may not be a bad thing as England are currently struggling in the Australia series). Apparently, England cricket captain Alistair Cook was going to be given a bottle through a customer so if I get some feedback I'll pass it on. A distinct shift has been noted towards customers purchasing bottled beer this year and along with the brewery's 5-litre Cow Casks an approximate increase of 50% is expected by the year's end. To reflect the increasing 'drink at home' culture, the brewery intends to



create a beer and cider club, in collaboration with Virtual Orchard Cider. Members will be offered discounts and open days at the brewery and cidery throughout the year, with the opportunity for tasting and to be a 'brewer for the day' and name the beer etc. The first beer will be called "COWch Potato" and will only be available in Cow Casks and bottles.

Sales of Sacred Cow single malt spirit continue to surge, with superb feedback from a growing following and a virtual sellout of the third, 54-litre batch in five weeks with no time left to mash and distil another before Xmas.

Three batches of Winter Ale were brewed this year with only a single cask left now which one canny pub will order... spices this year were mainly Star Anise and Cloves with a little Cinnamon and Black Cardamom. It's now only available in bottles and Cow Casks.

Looking forward to an interesting 2014.

Dan Bonner

(Brewer/Proprietor, Concrete Cow Brewery)

Regional London Crawl 2014 - Bermondsey

Every January, CAMRA's Central Southern Region, which includes our branch, organises a pub crawl in a different part of London. This year the area chosen was Bermondsey.

Writing in 1845 Charles Dickens was not impressed by Bermondsey ('...slime, poverty, filth, rot, and garbage...') but times have changed and Bermondsey is now a smart, desirable metro-zone with a superb brewery and some cracking pubs, as we found out.

The day began at Kernel Brewery, a thriving craft outfit under the arches of one of London's very first railway lines. We were treated to a brief tour before settling down to the serious business of sampling the brewery's products. But not for too long, for there were pubs to visit.

Here are the pubs at which we called. All sell real ale in good condition and all are worth finding - the circuit can comfortably be completed in a leisurely afternoon. Kernel brewery has a shop where you can buy their beers to take away or, as we did, drink at their bar.

Kernel Brewery, Arch 11 Dockley Road Industrial Estate, SE16 3SF

Shipwright's Arms, 88 Tooley Street, SE1 2TF

Woolpack, 98 Bermondsey Street, SE1 3UB

Rose, 123 Snowsfields, SE1 3ST

Simon the Tanner, 231 Long Lane, SE1 4PR

Dean Swift, 10 Gainsford Street, Butlers Wharf, SE1 2NE

Draft House. 206 – 208 Tower Bridge Rd, SE1 2UP

So, next time you find yourself with in Town with time on your hands, take a tube or bus to London Bridge, and enjoy!



MK & North Bucks Cider

Chapter 1 – A Tour of Local Cider Producers

For a while now CAMRA has had a scheme to identify producers of real ale within a 30 miles of the point of sale. Known as LocAle this has been a great way to raise awareness in both publican and consumer alike of all the nearby breweries and craft ale producers, of any size. Although APPLE (CAMRA's cider and perry committee) has not yet introduced a similar recognition for cider producers, I thought I'd take the opportunity to wave a flag for all those crafters of cider and perry that would qualify should a scheme exist. The list is probably a lot longer than you might think.

Starting to the north we have Windmill Vineyard (Hellidon, Daventry). Current owners have been producing (aside from around 1500 bottles of wine per year) a range of cider, perry and cyser (!) from local apples, crab apples and pears since 1996. A regular at Concrete Pint Festival, Windmill Vineyard is a consistent producer of real ciders as well as ciders with a bit of a twist. Vale of Welton, also near Daventry, have been going since 2005 and produce 3 ciders from their own cider apple orchard.

Eve's Cider is a small producer based near Kettering and produces a range of Eastern style ciders - not yet seen at Concrete Pint but a regular at Northampton Beer Festival. Not a million miles away is Rockingham Forest Cider where cider is lovingly crafted from 100% juice of Worcestershire-grown cider apples. Again, we've not yet had the privilege at Concrete Pint but hopefully might make an appearance in 2014. Saxby's Cider near Wellingborough is fairly new with the release of their bottled cider in 2013 and have plans to go big at their Crafty Pig cider house in 2014.

Just over the border into Oxfordshire, north of Banbury, is Thorn Brook Cider. Although they have only been going a few years they have three regular ciders using apples from their own orchards and further afield and are a regular at many of the sausage and cider festivals in this part of the country.

Moving South we find The Radnage Cider Company near West Wycombe producing around 7000 litres a year, and nearby Long Crendon Manor Cider on a



much smaller scale and sold exclusively by XT Brewing. At Hemel Hempstead we have the well known, and possibly oldest cider maker in the area, Millwhites with their ever popular rum, whisky and rioja cask ciders. Millwhites make their cider with apples from their own orchards in Somerset and are often seen at the Luton Beer Festival alongside Hardings Cider with their 3 Counties Bounty. Heading North-East now we find ourselves near Biggleswade and two producers in adjacent villages: Dunton Cider have been making their cider exclusively from village apples since 2010, and Potton Press makes a range of ciders and perry with fruit sourced from Bedfordshire and surrounding counties. Potton Press's Sweet Spot and Happy Medium are proving to be popular tipples at many a local festival.

Back to Bedford and we find a couple of small producers in the form of Evershed's Cider and the Harrold Calvados Society. The Society combines cider making with charitable fund-raising and its bottled brew, Lambasted BlueSpot, is a regular (along with their press) at the Bromham Apple Day. Evershed's, just up the road in Odell, make all their cider using local apples and can often be seen at many a farmer's market with their other homemade drinks alongside their cider.



Of course, we mustn't forget our in-branch cider makers of Virtual Orchard and Woughton Orchard. Whilst Virtual Orchard now has around 12 ciders to choose from, Woughton Orchard still makes its West Country style cider exclusively from cider apples grown in Woughton-on-the-Green.

So that's it. I bet you never knew there were so many cider makers so close to Milton Keynes and Buckingham. Of course, there may be a few more that are waiting to be discovered. In fact, I'm sure of it. Real cider is on the up and although we may not be a traditional cider making region, we're certainly going to make sure we get our share. Wassail!

By The Cider Insider

(to be continued in future issues of Beer Moos)



Pedals and Pints 2014



Valentine's Day's roses have begun to droop, snowdrops are poking through, it's twilight still at 5.30 – it must be late February (Saturday February 22 to be exact) and time for the annual Redway Cycle Crawl of community pubs. This year it was our ninth. As always, the ever stalwart Alan Sanders devised the route and led the crawl as he has in all previous nine years.

Around thirty riders came at the start and more joined en route. Starting point was the Prince Albert in Bradwell Village where licensees Dean and Val provided a sustaining breakfast. Then it was off to the Nag's Head in Great Linford, followed by the Ship Ashore at Willen (Branch Pub of the Year for 2014) and the Swan in Milton Keynes Village, where the influx of thirsty cyclists caused two of the four ales to run out! Next ports of call were the Cross Keys and the Barge in Woolstone, then came the uphill drag (testing for some after a few pints!) through Campbell Park and over the Belvedere to the Barn, with a downhill spin to J D Wetherspoons to finish.



Despite the wettest winter in living memory, the day was sunny and fine, though a strongish wind required vigorous pedalling in places. As on all previous rides, a good time was enjoyed by all participants. Very many thanks go to Alan for once more organising this great event.



Eight Desert Island Beers



Lyn Norman

I grew up in Cornwall and my first drinking experiences were of cider brewed out the back of local pubs or by friends' fathers – usually of lethal strength and dubious cleanliness. However, I was saved by the fact that my grammar school was next door to St Austell Brewery and my sixth-form lunch hours were made more interesting by a friend's Dad who worked at the brewery and got considerable amounts of free beer!

My first beer I encountered upon moving to Milton Keynes to train as a teacher was Greene King Abbot Ale. That was some 35 years ago when all around were non real ales, and when women were not supposed to drink pints. So, if only for nostalgia's sake, Abbot would have to come to the island to remind me of happy days in the Galleon at Old Wolverton or Greyhound in Haversham.

My second choice would be St Austell Tribute. This is a firm favourite of mine although St Austell did not start making it until after I'd left God's Fair County. It's ABV isn't too high, and it's refreshing with a slightly tawny taste – not as heavy as a bitter, so ideal for tropical heat.

Thirdly, I would have to take a Belgian beer in salute to the wonderful Belgian beer trips organised yearly by one of our members. My pick would be Kwak – a golden, almost syrupy mouthful with a very high ABV, but then you only sip Belgian beers.

Fourthly, Oakham Scarlet Macaw. Light, bright, and clean tasting – I feel its refreshing qualities would be truly appreciated on a desert island. I last had this one at Wetherspoon's MK and it was soooooo goooooo I had to award it 4.5 when I scored it!

On our judging surveys for the Good Beer Guide we visit many local pubs, and as pubs officer I have to go on all of these trips. My big WOW this year, introduced to me at the Mitre in Buckingham, was Oakham Citra. Again a cracking pint, a very light and as the name suggests citrus-tasting beer that won't be to everyone's taste – particularly those who prefer darker ales – but which I think is wonderful, and is my fifth choice

Number six would be our very own Concrete Cow Fenny Popper. Awesome! Not perhaps an ideal session ale as the ABV is quite high, but lovely and light and very quaffable. It is often available in MK and is also sold in bottles at most local garden centres.

Now I am beginning to struggle – so many beers vie for the last two places on my list. But decisions have to be

made, so for my seventh beer I shall go for Adnam's Ghost Ship – again a very light pale ale, not too strong but very drinkable and which survives bottling well. Lastly I am choosing Badger Golden Champion. This is a really good example of a bottled golden ale of which folks might like, as I do, to keep a stock for those dull wet days when you do not want to venture out – such as now when I'm writing this – surely a cue to open a bottle!! Cheers!

Lyn Norman

Confessions of a Survey Virgin

I've submitted beer scores for the various hostelries I've visited since I joined CAMRA but I'd never actually been on an 'official' branch surveying trip. So when our pubs office Lyn Norman asked for volunteers I leapt at the chance.

Thus with great anticipation I found myself on a Saturday morning waiting to be picked up so the day's surveying could commence. Lyn's car appeared with your editor already riding shotgun and we made our way to collect our newly appointed Young Person's Co-ordinator.

We headed first to the Woolpack in Buckingham where we were due to meet the fourth party member, who had come by bus and was already well in to his first half when we arrived. There were four beers on offer and, since, this was my first foray into group surveying, the etiquette was explained: we each had our own halves, but everyone tasted everyone else's beer and recorded their scores for each according to CAMRA's scoring system. So there followed a sort of game of Find the Lady with glasses moving back and forward across the table until we'd all sampled everything.

A quick stroll across the footbridge over the swollen River Ouse brought us to the New Inn. Here there were only two beers on so two halves of each were ordered and a slightly less complicated swap shop followed.

Scores recorded, we bid adieu to the New Inn and legged or drove the short distance to the Mitre. Five beers on offer here, which handily worked out at one each and a much smoother beer shuffle. Next stop was another New Inn, this time in Padbury. Again a choice from two pumps and a coffee for Lyn but she took the obligatory tasting sip of each beer and the scores were recorded. Our bus-user had a bit of a wait for his bus back, so we

got another round in to keep him company before saying our goodbyes.

We had planned to visit The Two Brewers in Thornborough but it had closed when we arrived so we made for the Nags Head in Winslow instead. One beer each here and another coffee for Lyn. Whilst in Winslow we decided to make an extra stop at the George which had two ales on from Marston's range which we dutifully scored. It was by now dark so we decided to call it a day and Lyn drove us home.

I hadn't known what to expect on this trip and had been pleasantly surprised. 'Surveying' isn't anywhere near as hard a task as it sounds, it's a pleasant day out visiting some really nice pubs in really good company. So, next time I hear Lyn's putting together a posse, I'll be first in line.

Ian Dolby

Can We Get Real?

A growing number of CAMRA members enjoy drinking the new craft keg beers as well as traditional real ales and the ongoing debate within CAMRA is whether or not CAMRA should support craft keg beers alongside cask conditioned (or real) ales. Personally, I prefer not to drink beer that has had carbon dioxide added artificially, no matter how good it tastes. I still go in search of the real thing.

For as long as I can remember, distinguishing between cask and keg beers in a pub has been clear and straightforward: cask beers are drawn through a hand-pump (or better still, a tap hammered directly into the cask) while keg beers are dispensed from a tall tap clad in illuminated plastic bearing the brewer's logo. (There is also electric dispense for cask ales, but it is not generally used in this part of the country, so I instinctively look for hand pumps when entering a pub for the first time.)

But recently, I have had this concept challenged.

Back in January, I went with several other CAMRA members to visit the Kernel Brewery in South London. Their range of beers is excellent and I particularly enjoyed their IPA. They sell their beers in bottle, but for consumption at the brewery they also have beer on draught. The brewery is open to the public on Saturdays and is very popular, so needless to say, was rather busy. While queuing for my beer, I noticed that there were no hand pumps along the bar and no casks visible on stillage. The beer was being

dispensed from taps that you see used for continental beers. Having previously visited breweries that produce a cask and a keg version of the same beer, I thought that perhaps I was about to drink craft keg. So I was relieved to hear the lady behind the bar tell the customer in front of me that all their beers are unpasteurised and unfiltered. But the question lingered in my mind, how do they get the beer to flow out the tap without a pump?



Although the brewery was packed, I managed to get a seat at one the long trestle tables. At the far end of the table I heard someone say that they pumped gas into the cask. I wondered why they would do that if the beer is cask conditioned. Somebody else corrected the statement and explained that they have an expanding air bag inside the cask, so the gas does not come into contact with the beer. And that answered the question in my mind – the pressure from the air bag forces the beer to flow from the opened tap.

Then, for some reason, my mind went back to a weekend my husband Alan and I spent in Cardiff last year. We'd downloaded, from the WhatPub online guide, a list of pubs in Cardiff that serve real ale. On the list was Zero Degrees, a bar with a very modern interior. The pub was quite busy and I did my normal scan but couldn't see a single hand pump. We debated whether we should ask at the bar, but it would be a while before we got served, so we decided to go to the next pub on the list. Was this a mistake? Was there a wonderful beer lurking behind a different form of dispense? Yes, having visited their website more recently I now know that they serve unfiltered, unpasteurised beer from serving tanks.

So - is it time that this old dog learned some new tricks? Yes, it is. Don't be fooled by appearances. Stainless steel and modern technology don't necessarily mean that the beer is not in its natural condition. Next time, I shall do some real research beforehand.

Jenny Ellway

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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.

March 2014

🍺 Thursday 20th

Pub of the Year 2014 Presentation and Branch Social, Ship Ashore, Willen 8pm.

🍺 Thursday 27th

Branch Meeting, The Barn, Central Milton Keynes, 8:15pm.

April 2014

🍺 Thursday 17th

Quiz at Watts Arms, Hanslope for Community Pubs Month, Minicoach leaves J D Wetherspoons 7:30pm, fare £5 per head.

🍺 Thursday 24th

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

🍺 Friday 25th - Sunday 27th

CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM 2014
The Spa Complex, Scarborough, YO11 2HD.
All CAMRA members are welcome to attend, but early booking of accommodation is strongly advised.
Details on www.camra.org.uk/agm

May 2014

Saturday 3rd - Monday 5th

May Bank Holiday beer festival at Cross Keys, Woolstone

🍺 Monday 5th

Branch Social at Cross Keys beer festival 2:30pm onwards

🍺 Thursday 29th

Branch Meeting, The Barn, Central Milton Keynes, 8:15pm.

Looking Ahead

🍺 Tuesday 17th June

Branch Social. Prince George, Tattenhoe 8pm

🍺 Tuesday 12th – Saturday 16th August

Great British Beer Festival returns to Olympia, London.
Booking begins in April. Details at www.gbbf.org.uk

Milton Keynes and North Bucks CAMRA Branch Aims for 2014

CAMRA head office requires all branches to prepare each year a list of aims they hope to achieve, and our branch is no exception. So, after much discussion, our new committee has decided on the following.

Our branch aims:

- To identify and draw to the attention of members and the general public all establishments where real beer and cider can be found in our area.
- To promote activities to improve standards of real beer and cider, food, other drinks, service, hygiene and facilities in all such establishments
- To continue to run a successful beer festival
- To publish relevant information to members and, where appropriate, the general public, using a combination of electronic and printed media.
- To make branch meetings more accessible and relevant to members
- To identify and undertake other activities that will add value for our members and attract them to participate actively
- To encourage members to contribute actively to the branch by supplying feedback from establishments they visit
- To augment this feedback with a systematic schedule of branch visits to establishments to ensure that every establishment is evaluated at least once each year
- To collect and collate all feedback from members and evaluation from visits and use this information to nominate pubs for Good Beer Guide and the branch Pub of the Year

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Opening Times
Mon 4pm - 10pm

Tues - Sat 12 noon - 12 midnight
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