

opening times

Huntingdonshire Branch of CAMRA

Issue 125 Winter 2005

New CAMRA
bid to save
community
pubs

St Neots Beer
Festival 16-18
February

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**CAMRA awarded 'super
complainant' status**

**Bottled beer retailers
awards**

**Roy Rides through lambic
land in Belgium**

Rockingham brewery talk

Greene King brewery visit

A look back in time

Pub and brewery news



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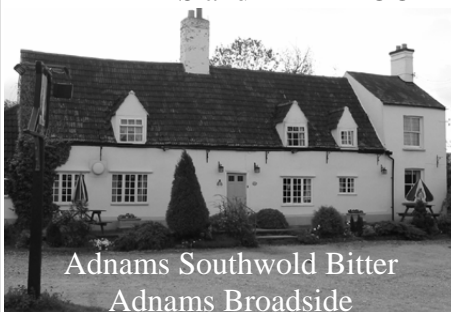
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NEW BID TO SAVE PUBS

CAMRA has launched a new campaign to prevent pub closures after its research showed that 26 pubs a month are closing permanently.

The Community Pubs Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation to provide advice and finance for community groups campaigning to prevent pub closures, and has been set up after increasing numbers of requests for help that CAMRA has received from local groups.

"We ask those seeking to demolish or convert a pub for financial gain to spare a thought for the effect this will have on the local community", said CAMRA's Chief Executive Mike Benner.

The new Foundation is directed by a board of trustees from CAMRA, English Heritage and the 'Pub is the Hub' initiative. It got off to a good start by raising over £3,000 at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, where it was launched.

"spare a thought for the effect this will have on the local community"

Part of the inspiration for the new campaign came from the case of the Dykes End pub at Reach near Cambridge, where locals clubbed together to buy the pub as a going concern.

Meanwhile pub goers in Bedfordshire are celebrating a victory over the former Greene King pub the Three Fyshes at Turvey, now owned by Churchill Taverns and appearing secure as a pub following fears that the site would be developed for luxury homes.

But in Cambridge the Flying Pig and the Osbourne Arms, two adjacent Victorian pubs, are threatened with demolition.

MORE CAMRA CLOUT

CAMRA has been awarded 'super complainant' status under the Enterprise Act 2000. This gives CAMRA direct access to the government's Office of Fair Trading about aspects of the beer market that work against the interests of consumers. And the OFT is given just 90 days to respond to such complaints. Other designated 'super-complaints' are the National Consumer Council, Citizens Advice, Postwatch and the Consumer Council of Northern Ireland.

Being part of this small elite of consumer groups gives CAMRA a powerful voice on structural aspects of the market, such as concentrations of pub ownership. CAMRA's Chief Executive Mike Benner believes that being granted this new status recognises the crucial role played by CAMRA over 35 years in highlighting where the beer and pub markets are failing to operate in the consumer interest.


Oakham ales
Award Winning Ales

 <p>J.H.B. Jeffrey Hudson Bitter 3.8% A.B.V. A golden beer whose aroma is dominated by hops that give characteristic citrus notes. Hops and fruit on the palate are balanced by malt and a bitter base. Dry hoppy finish with soft fruit flavours.</p>	 <p>White Dwarf 4.3% A.B.V. Piercing bitterness in this 'brite' English style wheat beer, mellows to reveal fruit overtones amidst a dry as bone finish. A real thirst quencher.</p>																														
 <p>Bishops Farewell 4.6% A.B.V. A strong premium beer of structured quality dominated by elaborate fruity hop notes, with a grainy background and dry finish.</p>	<p>SEASONAL ALES SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>BLACK HOLE PORTER</td> <td>5.5%</td> <td>JANUARY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>KALEIDOSCOPE</td> <td>4.7%</td> <td>FEBRUARY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FESTIVAL ALES</td> <td>VARIOUS</td> <td>MARCH/AUGUST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HARLEQUIN</td> <td>4.5%</td> <td>APRIL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MONTESSIMO GOLD</td> <td>5.0%</td> <td>MAY/JUNE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HELVETIA SKELTER</td> <td>5.2%</td> <td>JULY/AUGUST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ST. BRIDEN</td> <td>5.2%</td> <td>SEPTEMBER</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 LEAVES LEFT</td> <td>4.5%</td> <td>OCTOBER</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OLD TOSSEPT</td> <td>5.2%</td> <td>NOVEMBER</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GULLIVORN</td> <td>5.7%</td> <td>DECEMBER</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	BLACK HOLE PORTER	5.5%	JANUARY	KALEIDOSCOPE	4.7%	FEBRUARY	FESTIVAL ALES	VARIOUS	MARCH/AUGUST	HARLEQUIN	4.5%	APRIL	MONTESSIMO GOLD	5.0%	MAY/JUNE	HELVETIA SKELTER	5.2%	JULY/AUGUST	ST. BRIDEN	5.2%	SEPTEMBER	5 LEAVES LEFT	4.5%	OCTOBER	OLD TOSSEPT	5.2%	NOVEMBER	GULLIVORN	5.7%	DECEMBER
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A LOOK BACK IN TIME

25 YEARS AGO

At the end of 1980 CAMRA was rocked by the sudden death of its national chairman Joe Goodwin at the age of 31. A college lecturer based in Bournemouth, Joe had been an indefatigable chairman and a particular enthusiast for characterful unspoilt public bars and pub games.

CAMRA St Neots branch held winter branch meetings at the Falcon, Buckden and the Old Sun at Eaton Socon. The branch Christmas party was at the Hardwick Arms, Gamlingay and socials were held at the Jolly Sailor in Ramsey, Somersham Windmill and the Plough at Abbot-sley.

UK Brewers introduced labelling to inform drinkers of the original gravity of beers, following years of campaigning by CAMRA, who had been researching this information and publishing it in the Good Beer Guide for many years. Original gravity is an indication of the amount of sugar before fermentation and provides a useful guide to strength and body of beers.

Greene King added 3p a pint to the price of their draught beers in November 1980, blaming rising production and distribution costs. But rivals Charles Wells were praised by CAMRA for freezing their prices until some time in the New Year.

St Neots CAMRA reported that a number of local free houses were misleadingly using handpumps to serve Newcastle Bitter, a processed, pasteurised keg beer ironically promoted as 'the straight pint'. Brewers Scottish and Newcastle said that they had no policy on the use of handpumps and that it was all down to the licensee. The Green Man at Leighton Bromswold was expected to remove the beer in favour of the more welcome Greene King Abbot.

Tolly Cobbold recruited a new head brewer. 32 year old Trevor Roberts joined

Tolly from Wilsons brewery in Manchester, then part of the national Watney Mann group.

CAMRA's first conference involving outside bodies, a two day conference on pub preservation, was hailed a huge success. Brewers, pub licensees, designers and town planners addressed the conference at Oxford Polytechnic.

Cask beer Charrington IPA, brewed by national brewers Bass Charrington, was installed at the Montagu Arms, Grafham on the licensee's first anniversary there in winter 1980. At Alconbury the Mill was reported to be serving cask Ind Coope Bitter in November 1980 and Tolly Old Strong was added later, served direct from the cask. Old Strong was also a winter treat available at the Red Lion, Bassingbourn, the King William IV at Fensanton and Elsworth George and Dragon.

In the Colchester area CAMRA boasted of over 140 pubs stocking real ale, compared with just 53 five years earlier. Ind Coope, Tolly Cobbold, Adnams, Riddleys and Greene King were all jostling to provide their distinctive cask beers, but CAMRA activity was dwindling in the area, and there was a plea in the CAMRA members' newspaper What's Brewing for members to come forward to support the branch.

National brewers Whitbread now realised that cask beer was 'a thing of the future' as their spokesman announced that their new Cheltenham-brewed cask ale Flowers Original would soon be available to their pubs throughout the South West. In the north Whitbread revived the Chesters name in a new cask beer Chesters Best Bitter, brewed at Salford, and announced plans to re-introduce the old Duttons and Threlfalls names, previously axed following Whitbread's take-over of the breweries concerned.

A LOOK BACK IN TIME

At Needingworth 25 years ago the Chestnuts offered the entire Greene King range of cask ales and Ind Coope Burton Ale was expected to be added. Meanwhile Whitbread's Wethered's cask bitter was expected at the Vine, Buckden.

Greene King brewed Christmas Ale for the first time. The beer, brewed at Bury St Edmunds with an original gravity between 1060 and 1070, was a cask conditioned and darkened version of its bottled St Edmund Ale. But St Neots CAMRA bemoaned the fact that the ale was only available to its former Rayments houses, mainly in Hertfordshire.

CAMRA produced posters and window stickers to promote the then highly regarded cask beer Worthington Bitter, brewed by Bass in Burton and believed to be threatened by the brewer's lack of promotion for the beer. Worthington was down to around 60 outlets nationwide.

10 YEARS AGO

St Neots CAMRA held its second Winter Ales festival at the St Neots Town Football Club. There were 17 cask beers from 12 breweries mainly based in East Anglia. The beers were mostly strong winter ales but there were a few ordinary strength beers including Goddards Special Bitter from the Isle of Wight.

The European Commission began its review of the UK beer tie. It would not report for another year but larger local brewers such as Charles Wells and Greene King were most worried about a possible ban on the tied house system – smaller brewers were expected to be exempted from any ban. CAMRA supported the tie as it was expected that in its absence only a few national brewers would be able to compete in a market dominated by discounts and loan ties.

St Neots CAMRA visited Young's brewery in November 1995 and earlier that month

met at the Leeds Arms, Eltisley. A November social visited pubs in Offord (the Three Horseshoes) and Great Paxton and the Old Bridge in Huntingdon was the venue for the December meeting. In February 1996 there was a meeting at the Prince of Wales in Hilton and a social in Hartford at the Barley Mow and the King of the Belgians.

A short article in the CAMRA members' newspaper *What's Brewing* announced that CAMRA had joined the Internet with its own page on the World Wide Web.

In November 1995 CAMRA launched a 'call to arms' in response to a number of 'upheavals' in the UK brewing industry – the takeover of Courage by Scottish and Newcastle, the purchase of the Boddingtons pub estate by Greenalls, the closure by Carlsberg-Tetley of its Warrington brewery and the advance of the new nitro-keg beers.

In Bedfordshire the Nix Wincott brewery began a series of moves that eventually led to the beers being brewed in Cambridgeshire for a while. In early 1996, though, the brewery moved from the Three Fyshes pub at Turvey to Priory Farm a couple of miles away.

Meanwhile national brewers were accused of planning to close other breweries. Scottish & Newcastle denied a timetable for closures of Websters brewery in Halifax, Home in Nottingham and the Courage brewery in Bristol. (All of these did eventually close.) Carlsberg-Tetley's Ind Coope plant in Burton was also claimed by CAMRA to be facing the axe – it was eventually sold to Coors and in 2005 continues as a part of the merged former Bass and Ind Coope plants.

Meanwhile Bass's Highgate brewery in Walsall was saved from closure and received a new lease of independent life in a management buyout led by Caffreys

A LOOK BACK IN TIME

brand manager Steve Nuttall and Neil Bain, brewer from Bass's Cape Hill brewery.

Greene King reduced its use of cask breathers in late 1995 following criticism from CAMRA. Simon Jamieson of Greene King said 'We have reduced its importance. It was put into too many outlets. If a cask turns over in three days then the beer will look after itself.' Abbot Ale was also made more widely available in cask sizes as small as 36 pints. The cask breather device allows a blanket of gas to be drawn into casks as beer is drawn off. CAMRA opposes the device in favour of fresh cask beer and recommends small casks and appropriate beer ranges to allow quick turnover of casks.

In Peterborough, Charters became the first 'bar in a barge' to own a brewery as boss Paul Hook bought Oakham brewery, then in the Rutland town where it was set

up, from its founder John Wood.

Guinness made history by launching its first ever cask beer brewed in the UK at its Park Royal brewery in London. Harwood's Porter, 5.2% abv, was named after the Shoreditch publican Ralph Harwood, credited with inventing porter beer in the 1720's.

St Peters' brewery company was set up in a 13th century barn attached to a country house near Bungay, Suffolk with a £2 million cash injection that included a small estate of upmarket outlets.

In a U-turn in the 'full measure' debate, the Brewers and Licensed Retailers' Association recommended the use of over-sized lined glasses for beers served with a head. CAMRA welcomed this change of heart but called for the industry to drop their '95%' guideline and accept that a pint should be 100% liquid.

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PUB AND BREWERY NEWS

BREWERY NEWS

The latest Cambridgeshire brewery, at Yaxley near Peterborough, is coming on stream in a new partnership with the Wissey Valley brewery in West Norfolk, well known locally for the regular appearance of its real ales in bottle at farmers' markets. Stewart Blake, a former commercial manager in the construction industry, has converted his passion for producing 40-pint brews at home into brewing on a larger scale and has joined forces with Tony Hook of Wissey Valley brewery. The partnership is now trading as **Craftsman Brewery**, the name being a reference to Stewart's previous career.

Early bottled real ales from the new brewer, produced at the Wissey Valley site near Stoke Ferry, were Blacksmith's Mild (alcohol by volume 3.6%), Cherry Porter (4%) and Mad Jack (6.0%). Beers produced at Yaxley are expected to be seen soon at local pubs and farmers markets at St Ives and elsewhere.

Other Craftsman beers are Craftsman Bitter (3.9%), a crisp copper coloured bitter hopped with target, challenger and goldings hops, Apprentice Porter (3.9%), a dark, almost black beer with malt, chocolate and a dry character from roasted barley. Tanner's Dark Ale (5.5%) is a rich and smooth malty reddish brown ale.

Tony Hook is continuing to brew beers at the Stoke Ferry site as usual, often using novel ingredients such as liquorice, used in a recent brew, Liquorice Stout (6.0%). There is a future plan to merge the two operations at a new site.

There is a theme that runs through the backbone of the embryonic Craftsman Brewery, as Stewart Blake explains:

"Beer needs to be wholesome, tasty and made in a traditional manner with only

natural ingredients. There is no point in producing a beer that tries to emulate the mass-produced stuff on the market - the big boys have got it off to a tee. There are a lot of very good beers out there if you wish to look for them. I hope that Craftsman Brewery beers will be classed as some of them.

"I love a strong tasty beer that lets you know its been drunk. I like to think that even my weaker brews have enough about them to make you think...mmm...I'll have another one of those! We have a wonderful history of brewing in this country and with the rising interest in good beer I can only see the Great British pint going from strength to strength"

Potton Brewery, just across the border in Bedfordshire, won the Bronze Award in CAMRA's Champion Beer of East Anglia competition in September for their Village Bike beer (abv 4.3%). The overall Gold Award went to a draught mild from the Mighty Oak brewery in Essex. Oscar Wilde (abv 3.7%) is named after the cockney rhyming slang expression for mild. The silver award went to Old Style Porter from the St Peters brewery in Suffolk, which is currently for sale.

PUB NEWS

Planning applications have been lodged for changes at the **Floods Tavern, St Ives** and the **Globe in St Neots**. At The Floods extensions are planned to provide more dining and drinking accommodation. At the Globe a refurbishment is proposed to include changes to the entrance area.

At **Hartford** the **King of the Belgians** has been sold by Alliance and Mutual Pubs following a successful campaign against their plan to close this popular local. It is business as usual under the new ownership and licensee Jamie McAulay will remain in charge.

PUB AND BREWERY NEWS

At the **Three Horseshoes, Houghton** the range of real ales has been boosted to five under the proprietorship of Jason Annetts, who took over the lease of the village pub from his parents when they retired last year. Two wheat beers are also on sale.

Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries will open a newly built pub in our neighbouring area at **Cambourne** High Street. This follows the arrival of Wolves and Dudley in the Huntingdonshire area through their acquisition of Wizard Inns, including the Priory, St Neots and Cromwell's Bar in Huntingdon.

Something new going on in your pub? Contact the editor with the details to get your pub highlighted in this column.

Andy Shaw, news@huntscamra.org.uk, (01480) 355893.

The **Tavern on the Green** at **Great Staughton** is a new entry in the Michelin 'Eating Out in Pubs' guide. The 2006 issue includes four other pubs in the Huntingdonshire CAMRA area that have been listed previously, the Cock at Hemingford Grey, Broughton Crown, the Pheasant at Keyston and the George at Spaldwick.

The £1m refurbishment of Greene King pub the **Windmill** at **Somersham** was expected to be completed in early November, with the pub reopening on 5th November, following earlier extensions into the adjacent row of cottages in previous years. The remaining two cottages in the row have been incorporated into the pub in the latest work. Over recent years the Windmill has become ever more popular for food and the extensions will provide more places for diners whilst retaining the sociable areas for drinking that have always been a part of the Windmill's charm.



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Nov 2005!**
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A VISIT TO GREENE KING

Inevitably, the subject of Ridleys brewery cropped up soon after our arrival for a tour of the Bury St Edmunds brewery last August. Essex brewer Ridleys, then due for closure and since closed, is the latest victim of Greene King's renewed appetite for takeover of other brewers. And despite the assertions of our Greene King guide, small brewers are not necessarily non-viable - large numbers of profitable breweries have been closed over the years to fuel the growth of bigger brewers at the cost of choice for consumers and locally distinctive beers.

Essex brewer Ridleys, now closed, is the latest victim of Greene King's renewed appetite for takeover of other brewers.

Greene King brews in the 1938 brew house built on the merger of the breweries of Greene and King. Fermenting capacity has been gradually boosted in recent years and brewing is now 24 hours a day.

The brewery uses water drawn from the chalk below the site, originally used for brewing by monks at the nearby Abbey. For Morlands, Ruddles, and Ridleys beers this is 'Burtonised' by adding ions to match the high levels of calcium and sulphate ions famously found in the hard brewing waters in Burton on Trent.

Three mash tuns are fed with malt mostly produced from barley grown in North Norfolk. Smaller amounts of special grains are also used, such as wheat malt for 'Beer to Dine For', torrefied wheat for Ridleys and chocolate malt for darker beers.

Four oil fired brewing coppers receive hop pellets for the boil. Varieties include First Gold, Bramling Cross, Fuggles, Challenger and Goldings. The beer 'Ale Fresco' receives late Cascade hops added to a dual-purpose whirlpool after

the boil; this gives the powerful hallmark citrus hop aroma of this beer. Tetnang hops add a melon flavour to 'Beer to Dine For' which also receives late hopping.

The site of the Benjamin Greene brewery is used to house the fermentation of IPA and Abbot Ale, mainly in 400 and 800-barrel fermenters. An older fermenting area uses the Morlands yeast strain to ferment the smaller brews of the Morlands and Ruddles brands in covered 80-120 barrel fermenters dating from Victorian times.

Elsewhere in the brewery is an historic tradition unique to this country but similar to methods used in Belgium. 100-barrel oak vats covered with Suffolk marl are used to mature a strong beer called 5X for two years. The tradition appears safe, as a new vat has recently been installed. Between brews the insides of the vats are burnt to sterilise them and bring out the oak flavour.

5X is an ingredient of the unique bottled vintage ale Strong Suffolk (alcohol by volume 6.0%), produced by blending 10% of 5X with 90% of a brew known as BPA. The result is a full-bodied dark ale combining a spicy fruitcake aroma with flavours of oak, caramel and burnt toffee.

In the brewery sampling room the Greene King, Morlands and Ruddles cask brands were available for sampling, as was Strong Suffolk.

5X is an ingredient of the unique bottled vintage ale Strong Suffolk

Greene King XX Dark had previously been sampled in excellent form at the Rose and Crown not far from the brewery. This chocolaty, malty and dryish mild ale, ironically brewed at the doomed Ridleys brewery, was a tremendous advertisement for Greene King's brands.

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ST NEOTS BEER FESTIVAL, BOOZE ON THE OUSE 16th-18th FEBRUARY, PRIORY CENTRE, ST NEOTS

FESTIVAL DETAILS

This is our 26th 'Booze on the Ouse' and the first to be held in St Neots since 1985.

REAL ALES

We hope to serve *over the course of the festival* around 35 real ales from all over the UK, both from the well-established independent breweries and the newer, smaller micro-breweries. Visit our web site for updates: www.huntscamra.org.uk/festivals.

FOREIGN BEER

The popular foreign beer bar will be selling a range of Belgian, Dutch, German and Czech bottled beers including examples of the most distinctive individualistic beer styles in the world, such as Trappist, lambic and wheat beers.

CIDER AND PERRY

The traditional cider bar will be serving a selection of tasty traditional ciders & perrys.

FOOD AND DRINK

A food counter selling both hot and cold food will operate at all sessions. Free soft drinks will be available from the real ale bar for the designated driver of your party.

CAMRA PRODUCTS STAND

Come along and chat to our staff and learn about CAMRA, beer brewing and pubs. CAMRA and brewery products will be on sale, including sweatshirts, t-shirts and polo shirts, as well as books, pens, badges and beer mats. Adjacent will be the fabulous 'Every One's A Winner' tombola stall.

THE WORKERS

The festival is organised and run by members of CAMRA who are all unpaid volunteers. We always need more helpers so join at the festival's CAMRA stand.

STAFF NEEDED

The festival always needs more staff, so if you can help at any session please contact Andy Shaw (see below)

ADVERTISERS

A 32-page programme will be produced for the festival. Advertising at competitive rates. Reach 3,000+ beer drinkers. Contact the Programme Editor for more information.

CONTACT NUMBER

Festival Organiser & Programme Editor, Andy Shaw - 01480 355893 – festival@huntscamra.org.uk

CHILDREN AT THE FESTIVAL

Whilst lunchtime is the ideal time to bring the family to the festival, we do allow children into the hall up to 9.00pm in the evening, and we have a separate family area.

FESTIVAL VENUE

The festival is being held at the Priory Centre, very close to the Market Square, in the centre of St Neots.

OPENING TIMES

Thu 16th 6pm-10.45pm; Fri 17th 12 noon-3pm, 5pm-10.45pm; Sat 18th all day, 12 noon-10.45pm.

Entrance including programme:

50p Friday and Saturday lunchtimes

£2.00 Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings (from 7 pm)

Free entry to CAMRA members at all sessions—a good reason to join CAMRA.

Happy Hour: Thursday 6-7pm & Friday 5-7pm: Entrance 50p & reduced price draught beer.

Please Note: No entry or re-admission after 10.30pm

NEW EVENT! Make a note in your diary!



HUNTINGDONSHIRE CAMRA BRANCH

**16th-18th
February 2006
Priory Centre
St. Neots**

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(over the duration of the festival)

**PLUS CIDER AND
BOTTLED FOREIGN
BEERS**

BEER FESTIVAL

Booze on the Ouse



Opening Times:

Thursday 16th	6pm - 10.45pm
Friday 17th	12 noon - 3pm 5pm - 10.45pm
Saturday 18th	All day from 12 noon - 10.45pm

Entry (including programme):

50p	Friday and Saturday lunchtime
£2.00	Thursday - Saturday evenings (from 7pm)
<i>CAMRA members free entry to all sessions</i>	

**Happy Hour Thursday 6-7pm and Friday 5-7pm:
Entrance 50p and reduced price draught beer**

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stall and
tombola**

**Soft drinks,
wines and
spirits bar**

**Free soft drinks
for designated
drivers**

ROY RIDES

This time we have a Roy Rides with a difference! A 4-day tour round Payottenland in Belgium, home to lambic beer.

For anyone like us who is interested in Belgian beer, the definitive guide since 1992 has been Tim Webb's Good Beer Guide to Belgium, the latest edition of which was published in May 2005. In 2004 Tim, with co-authors Chris Pollard and Joris Pattyn, went one step further with Lambicland, a guide to "the world's most complex beers and simplest cafes".

Briefly, lambic is a beer style unique to an area of Belgium called Payottenland to the south west of Brussels. Lambic beer is different in that it spontaneously ferments from natural yeasts in the air and not from cultured yeast.

Reading this book could not fail to whet the appetite, and one statement in particular caught our eye – "the most pleasurable way to travel through Payottenland is by bicycle". Now we are keen cyclists so for us there could not be a better way to experience all those complex beers and simple cafes.

Twelve months in the planning, our trip took place in July 2005, and this is the journal of our 4-day pilgrimage.

Thursday: Leave on the 08:39 Eurostar from Waterloo. Arrive Brussels Midi at 12:10 and soon we are on a train to the town of Halle, in the heart of Payottenland.

A brief walk from the station and we are at Cambrinus – sadly it's closed for the owner's annual vacation. We move swiftly on to the Grote Markt (main square). At **De Met**, a long thin traditional bar with dark wood walls, we start with lunch - a double Crouque Mousiuer washed down with a St Feuillien Blonde. Next we cross the square to **Sleutel**, another traditional cafe, where we sample draught De

LAMBIC LAND

Koninck, and our first lambic, Boon Gueuze.

To explain the terms, traditional lambic beers are available draught from the cask either "yong" when they slightly sweet, or "oude" when they take on characteristics similar to traditional cider. Gueuze is produced by blending oude and yong lambic, the sugar in the latter creating a secondary fermentation that after a long maturation period creates a beer with a spritzy, champagne like character. Fruit lambics have that same character, and are prepared in a similar way, but using the sugar of fruits like cherries and raspberries to stimulate the secondary fermentation.

We cross the square to **Klein Stadhuis**, an old style tavern with wood-panelled walls, bench seating, and marble topped tables. Here we try Boon Duivel, not a lambic but a dark brown ale with a pronounced liquorice taste.

At this point our bikes arrive, being delivered to us by a local hire company. We have a 6-mile ride to our first night stop, Beersel, most of the journey along the banks of the broad Brussels-Charleroi canal, and the last part up a very steep hill.

Beersel has been the centre of the lambic revival over the last 50 years, and was until recently the home of two lambic brewers and gueuze blenders. Our primary reason for being here is to have dinner at Drie Fonteinen, the source of some of the very best gueuze and krik. But first, we drop off our luggage at the hotel **Centrum** and set off to visit Beersel's other cafes.

First **Camping**, so named because it adjoins a camping site. This modern bar with Formica tables is the HQ of the football team, and the local pigeon fanciers – a



ROY RIDES

village institution! It's late afternoon and we are the only customers. We try the draught Boon Kriek – this is not an “oude kriek” but unlike many of the commercial lambics it has an intense natural cherry flavour, and is very refreshing. Next we visit **Oude Prium**, a traditional café with bench seating around the walls. Again we are the only customers allowing us to have a conversation with the café owner. We try a bottle of Girardin Oude Gueuze, and then for something completely different, the beer list includes Guinness, but this is 8% ABV and is brewed locally.

Now for the main event - **Drie Fonteinen**. We start with an aperitif, a spicy wit beer Tarwe. Our soup arrives, and we order a lambic, an old example with a good citrus character. Our main course is guinea fowl in kriek with cherries, which we have with the Oude Gueuze, which is spritzy, dry and lemony. The waitress wants to know if we want dessert. Of course! We have a special edition Oude Kriek made with real Schaerbaekse cherries – it is excellent, but at £10 a bottle it should be.

Our plan had been to return to the Centrum, but we tarry too long at Drie Fonteinen, and the Centrum bar has closed, so we return to Camping, which has now become the hub of the village, with many customers deep in conversation about football and pigeons!

“If the rain continues, we might stay for weeks, soaking up the atmosphere”

Friday: We retrace our route back to Halle, and continue along the canal to Lambeek. There we visit **De Kring**, an excellent old bar in the shadow of the town's church just off the square. After a Maes Pils (just to wash away the dust of our cycle ride) we try the Boon Oude Gueuze - very smooth with a pleasant lemon nose. The other town's bar, Cen-

LAMBIC LAND

trum in the square, is closed for July (another vacation?) so we go to visit the



Boon Brewery, just out of the town. The brewery is only open for visitors on Wednesdays, but we at least

look round the brewery yard and marvel at the huge oak barrels used for maturing the lambic beer. Then it was back to De Kring for a Boon Oude Kriek.

Our next destination is Sint-Pieters-Leeuw north of Halle, but since we are cycling through Halle, we stop for a sandwich and an Orval at the **Klein Stadhuis** in the Grote Markt.

We meander along quiet country lanes until we reach the edge of Sint Pieters Leeuw and **Oud**

Smis van Mekinge, a small roadside café. This is like the front parlour of a



farmhouse, with simple wooden bank seats around the walls. The café has connections with the defunct local lambic blender Moriau, now owned by Boon, and we share a 75cl bottle of Moriau Oude Geuze, smooth and lemony. It starts to rain, so we take the opportunity to sample the Moriau Kriek. As we sample, a number of locals call in for a drink, and a chat, and then leave. The rain continues so we enjoy a Boon Kriek. If the rain continues, we might stay for weeks, soaking up the

ROY RIDES

atmosphere. But dry weather arrives and it is time to move on.

We had planned to call in at several cafes in the centre of Sint Pieters Leeuw, but in the middle of a wet Friday afternoon, Sint Pieters Leeuw is closed. Belgian cafes only stay open if there are paying customers! But we will return here later.

To the north of Sint Pieters Leeuw is **Vagevuur**, a busy modern café at a 5-way junction. We are initially intimidated by a large party of cyclists, all Eddy Merckx lookalikes, all much older and visibly fitter than we! But we soon comfortably settle in to some draught lambic from Lindemans.

We spend the night at **Klein Nederlo**, a small modern family-run hotel with a pleasant bar, where we enjoy a meal and a good range of beers, including a couple of trappist ales. One of the joys of Belgium is that one can enjoy excellent bottled beers almost anywhere. Hopefully, with increasing availability of Real Ales in a Bottle, this will soon be true in Britain.

"Boon Oude Gueuze — at 9:30am! Well this is Belgium."

Saturday: An early start—lots of cafés to visit. The first is **Mayts-Polle** in the small village of Elingen. We arrive at 9:30am, unsure whether the café will be open so early. We are not disappointed and a number of locals are already enjoying a pils in this classic simple one roomed café with wooden bank seating and Formica-topped tables. We of course order a Boon Oude Gueuze—at 9:30am! Well this is Belgium. The café owner is fascinated to know that we have found this remote spot on the recommendations of an English beer writer!

Next stop the somewhat larger village of Gooik, and the café **Groene Port**, where we sample the excellent Giradin Gueuze sitting in the sun in their delightful garden.

LAMBIC LAND

Just down the road is **Cam**, café cum museum cum home of the De Cam gueuze blenders. The single large room with a rustic feel is hosting an extended party who are having coffee and cakes—we of course have a taster tray of lambic, krieken lambic and gueuze.

In the country north of Gooik is **Haas**, a real country pub, with a large garden populated by chickens and geese and with an excellent view of the surrounding countryside. Here we lunch on open cheese sandwiches, and Boon draught lambic, served through a handpump! Lingering for a while, we also try a Boon Oude Kriek—dry, complex, with lots of fruit and a long finish.

Continuing north, we come to Wambeek, and the café **Vierhoek**—very modern but even here Giraden draught lambic (yong) is available. Yong lambic is quite sweet, with lots of yeast and some hop character—not totally dissimilar to British ale.

Just down the road are two modern café's facing each other at a crossroads. **Welkom** offers us another chance to sample Giraden lambic, this time oude, but **Gendarm** has no lambic, so we have a Hoegaarden Wit.

Continuing east we cross the busy N8 road where we see the now closed Eylenbosch lambic brewery. We continue to Sint-Anna-Pede and the modern café **Sint Anna**. Here we find the guide is inaccurate, and there is nothing worth drinking. We order a Belle-Vue Kriek "Extra" and instantly regret the decision, leaving the sickly sweet artificial beverage on the table. We fare better at **Pedehof**, a simple one-room café with wooden bank seating and formica-topped tables. More oude draught Giraden lambic—you can't get too much of a good thing!

Now heading west towards Schepdaal, our evening's destination, we stop at the

ROY RIDES

traditional roadside café **Rustberg**, which offers yong Giraden lambic.

We cycle to Schepdaal and check in at our hotel, the modern Lienzana on the N8 road, and walk into the village to **Rare Vos** a Payottenland “must do”. The front bar is traditional with wooden slatted benches, but many other rooms have a variety of styles, including a comfortable snug, and numerous rooms for diners, because the food here is excellent and traditional. We start with the house beer, Rare Vos, a Flemish brown ale that has some lambic faro character. We try many other beers here and my tasting notes become sadly unintelligible.

“an al fresco lunch, Moules et Frites washed down with Boon Oude Gueuze”

Sunday: Our first stop is Sint-Martens-Lennik, a pleasant ride south from Schepdaal. As we arrive locals are entering the church in the main square, but the café **Pleintje** opposite is open for business. The main bar has an old tiled floor, simple tables and chairs. We decide that it's too early for gueuze and we have a draught Hoegaarden Wit.

By the time we leave at 10am, the café **Bij Gust**, at the top end of the church square, has opened, its opening seeming to coincide with end of the church service. Bij Gust is a very basic old bar with a tiled floor and pews around the walls. Our delicate stomachs require an undemanding beverage so we opt for a Jupiler Pils.

Off the square on the main road is **Klosken**, an old red brick building, once a farm. The house beer, Klosken bier, is like an abbey dubbel—a bit sweet, but with an excellent malty body and finish.

Leaving Sint-Martens-Lennik we head cross-country down quiet lanes heading south towards Gaasbeek. Here we fail to find Land van Gaasbeek, which the guide

LAMBIC LAND

recommends, and following some misdirection from a well meaning local, we find ourselves at **Oud Gasbeek**, opposite Gasbeek Castle, where draught Timmermans Kriek is expensive and to our palates, sweet and syrupy—another mistake.

We recover by cycling to Vlezenbeek, and down a road to nowhere find **Kiek**, another classic simple one bar lambic café offering Giriden Lambic (yong).

At this point we had intended to cycle due south to Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, but with so many twisting and turning country lanes we soon find ourselves in an distinctly urban setting, that later we would determine was the suburbs of Brussels. After getting directions at a very strange café from a “painted lady” we are once again on the right course.

Back in Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, we visit one of the places closed on our visit on Friday. **Watermolen**, is a converted water mill, now a high class restaurant. Feeling that we deserve a reward for our endeavours, we treat ourselves to an al fresco lunch, Moules et Frites washed down with Boon Oude Gueuze.

We are now close to the end of our journey. We head back to Halle and return our bikes at the Grote Markt, then head for the station and the train to Brussels.

Our tour has covered only the southern half of Payottenland and we look forward to our planned return to investigate the northern half.

Roy Endersby and Andy Shaw



STUCK FOR CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS?

Not sure what to buy your Mum, Dad, Brother, Sister or friends for Christmas? Then try something a little different this year to the usual socks, perfume or naff CD! CAMRA Gift membership is the perfect gift for that special person who loves real beer and fantastic pubs. And if you are looking for that something extra special then we are also offering a variety of books at a discounted rate to complement the CAMRA gift membership. Please tick the appropriate boxes and complete the necessary details on this form:

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CAMRA Gift Membership £18*
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300 Beers To Try Before You Die £11 (cover price £12.99)



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ROCKINGHAM BREWERY

A meeting of Huntingdonshire CAMRA enjoyed a talk at the Cock, Hemingford Grey by brewer Brian Bosworth of Rockingham Brewery, just over the border in Northamptonshire.

Brian had been a keen home brewer for many years when a chance came to buy redundant brewing equipment from the Yates and Jackson brewery in Lancaster, closed by Thwaites of Blackburn in 1984.

The function of some of the redundant brewing equipment was something of a mystery, until it was discovered that this was part of an old central heating system that had been used, not for brewing beer, but . . . as a central heating system.

The main brewing vessel had been in use as both a mash tun and a copper, with an intermediate transfer to another vessel to allow removal of spent grain from the mash -not the easiest way to brew beer.

Brian uses a bottom-fermenting yeast from the German Weihenstephan brewery

But Brian has successfully developed his two-barrel part time brewing operation over eight years and keeps around half a dozen of his favourite local pubs supplied with a rotating choice of six regular ales and seasonal beers. Beers are also brewed to order.

The plethora of beers that emanate from Rockingham are the result of Brian's enthusiasm for trying different malts, kilned to various levels and included in recipes to supplement the standard pale malt for their influence on beer flavour. Different hop varieties are also important, and consistency and high quality of hops is ensured by buying in sealed 1 kg bags.

Perhaps surprisingly, a bottom-fermenting

yeast is used, bought in dried form from the German Weihenstephan brewery and taking advantage of the much improved yeast drying technology which these days no longer adds a tell-tale taint to the final product. This yeast lends itself well to the relatively long conditioning period given to the Rockingham ales before racking, and settles well in the cask.

We enjoyed the seasonal Fineshade (abv 4.1%) an autumnal reddish brew with balanced flavours from malt and hops, served in superb condition from the cellar at the Cock. One of the most successful regular Rockingham beers is Fruits of the Forest (abv 4.2%), with summer fruit, spicy and hoppy flavours. Six hop varieties are used in the light amber 3.9% Hop Devil, and a hoppy blonde ale, Forest Gold is another successful regular 3.9% brew.

CIDER

CAMRA has launched a new competition, as part of the National Cider and Perry month celebrations, to find Britain's best bottled 'real' cider and perry and to help revise its definition on what constitutes a 'real' bottled cider or perry. Cider and Perry producers from around the country are being encouraged to enter the competition by sending four bottles of their product to CAMRA.

Also October saw the launch of a new edition of CAMRA's Good Cider Guide. The guide contains listings of cider and perry producers and a selection of ~600 outlets. Also included are articles about cider museums, orchards, and heritage areas. The guide is priced £10.99 and is available from all good book shops, or direct from CAMRA: 01727 867201 or www.camra.org.uk/books.

CAMRA AWARDS FOR BOTTLED BEER RETAILERS

CAMRA has presented awards to shops and retailer groups for their marketing of bottled real ale. CAMRA's best independent retailer 2005 has been named as the Real Ale Shop, Brantfill Farm, at Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk (www.realaleshop.co.uk).

Owner Teddy Maufe said, "The Real Ale Shop is delighted to win this award and we hope it will go on to further public awareness that Norfolk produces some of the world's best malted barley for brewing many superb real ales."

CAMRA's best Retail Chain 2005 has been named as Booths Supermarkets who run a chain of stores in the north west of England.

Retailers were judged by CAMRA on their ranges of real ale in bottle, innovations in

promotion of these beers, the helpfulness of staff and value for money.

The awards form part of CAMRA's 'Real Ale in a Bottle' scheme, whereby breweries can opt to use the "CAMRA says this is real ale" logo on their bottle labels of bottle-conditioned products to help differentiate them from pasteurized bottled ale substitutes.



ANOTHER 'GREAT' ST IVES BEER FESTIVAL

CAMRA's 'Booze on the Ouse' event at the St Ivo Centre in September has been hailed as another great festival by the large number of customers who completed feedback forms at the occasion.

A completed form was received for one in every thirteen admissions. Allowing for repeat visits this could provide the views of more than 10% of visitors, a very representative sample of views.

Organisers in CAMRA's Huntingdonshire branch are grateful for this feedback, which will be used in planning future events. Consumers clearly enjoyed themselves as indicated by the many unsolicited comments, many being glowing tributes to the quality of the beers and the friendly and helpful service throughout the festival.

Most patrons enjoy the absence of live music at the festival, but a significant ma-

jority enthusiastically supports the provision of recorded background music. Most comments on the new smoking ban were favourable.

Many commented enthusiastically on the balance of the range of cask beers and foreign beers and the wide choice available until the closing stages of the festival. 95% of customers thought the temperature of the cask beers was about right.

Another sign of approval for the beer range is the fact that only 4 out of 51 cask beers on sale failed to secure any votes for 'beer of the festival'. Four beers were clearly ahead of the field, though. In 4th place was Woodforde's Wherry and Cairngorm Tradewinds was in 3rd place. Two beers tied for 1st place; the joint winners were Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild and Crouch Vale Brewers Gold.

Britain's Number One Beer and Pubs Guide

Good Beer Guide 2006

"The Good Beer Guide... the perfect book when you're Out"

Andrew Flintoff
England Cricket All-Rounder

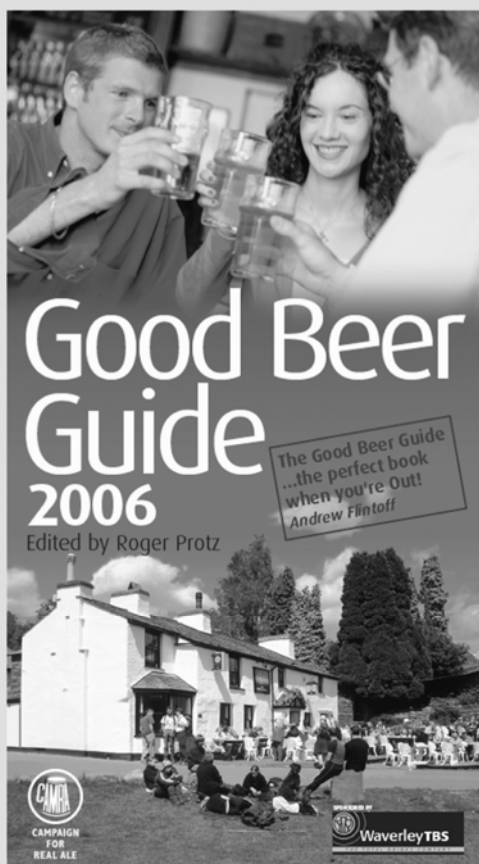
This best-selling guide provides details on 4,500 of the best real ale pubs in Britain today. All pubs listed within the guide serve good-quality real ale and are inspected throughout the year to ensure a consistently high standard.

Every entry contains contact details for each pub as well as descriptions and information on the choice of real ales, food and suitability for families. This beer lovers' bible also contains information on all Britain's breweries with tasting notes for real ales brewed in the UK.

Edited by Roger Protz, the Good Beer Guide 2006 is available direct from the Campaign for Real Ale, RRP £13.99 but just £10 plus £1 p&p (in the UK) for CAMRA members. Call 01727 867201 to order or buy online at www.camra.org.uk/shop

Published in
September 2005

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EVENTS AND SOCIALS

December 2005 – Social Around Huntingdon Pubs

- Tues 6th Open Committee Meeting, **The Rivermill, Eaton Socon** (8.30 pm).
 Fri 16th Social around **Huntingdon** pubs, starting at the **Market Inn** at 8.30 pm, moving to the **Victoria** at 9.15 pm, the **Samuel Pepys** at 10.00 pm.

January 2006 – Christmas Social in Little Gransden

- Tues 10th Open Committee Meeting, **Pike and Eel, Needingworth** (8.30 pm).
 Fri 13th **Christmas Social** with buffet at **The Chequers, Little Gransden** (8.30 pm).
 Sat 21st Trip to the **Cambridge Winter Ale festival** (2 pm). Bus services available from St Neots and Huntingdon.

February 2006 – St Neots Beer Festival

- Tues 7th **Pre-festival meeting, The Bridge, St Neots** (8.30 pm) for all those helping with the St Neots Beer festival. If you would like to help at the festival, please contact Andy Shaw, on 01480 355893.
 Thurs 16th to Saturday 18th **St Neots Beer Festival** – Priory Centre, St Neots. Opening Times: Thurs: 6-10.45 pm; Fri 12-3 pm & 5-10.45 pm; Sat 12-10.45 pm. **FREE ENTRY to CAMRA members. VOLUNTEERS WELCOME**

March 2006 – Cambridge Moonshine Brewery Tour

- Tues 7th Open Committee Meeting, **Dragoon, Brampton** (8.30 pm).
 Fri 17th **New members' social, Woolpack, St Neots** (8.30 pm) for members who joined at the St Neots Beer Festival. A **FREE PINT** for new members and all those who helped at the Booze on the Ouse festival.
 Sat 25th Visit to the **Cambridge Moonshine Brewery** and then evening social around local pubs. Bus services available from St Neots and Huntingdon.

April 2006 – **AGM**

- Tues 11th **Annual General Meeting, Three Horseshoes, Abbots Ripton** (8.30 pm).

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TRADING STANDARDS

Your local Trading Standards organisation is Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards. If you have any complaints about trading standards issues at local pubs please contact them.

They have a role to protect consumers from errors or frauds concerned with quality, description or price of goods, services or facilities and to detect and rectify unfair advertising practices.

Contact **Cambridgeshire Trading Standards** helpdesk on 0845 3030666, or at Trading Standards Division, Sackville House, Sackville Way, Great Cambourne, Cambridgeshire, CB3 6HD. The trading standards web site is www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

OPENING TIMES

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Contact the Editor Andy Shaw, on:

(01480) 355893, or

news@hunts.camra.org.uk, or

13a Peppercorns Lane, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8HL.

To Advertise

To place an advert or enquire about our rate card please contact:

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**Deadline for Spring 2006 issue (126) is
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At Offord D'Arcy



Sea Food Evenings

Last Friday of Every Month

Sea Food Extravaganza includes:

Lobsters, Langoustines, Dressed

Crab, Octopus, Squid, Smoked

Marlin, Smoked Salmon, Moules

Mariniere, Red Snapper, Sea Bass,

Tiger Prawns, and many more delights from the sea.

Champagnes and Fine Wines on Offer

Tickets in advance from the bar.

£27.50—Eat as much as you like

Sunday Carvery

New Extended Hours

Midday—8.00pm

Opening Hours

Monday—Saturday

11:30am-11:00pm

Sunday Midday—10:30pm

Food Served

All Day Every Day

For all enquiries please telephone

01480 810293

90 High Street, Offord D'Arcy,

PE19 5RH

Tuesday Night is Curry Night

Choose from Authentic Balti, Jalfrezi, Korma or Thai Green Curry

£7.95 including all traditional accompaniments

Wednesday Night Carvery

5.30pm—9.30 pm

Main Course Adults £7.95

Kids £3.95

Eat as much as you like

Christmas at the Horseshoe!

Bookings now being taken for
dinners and functions

throughout December

Call in for a Menu Now

Carvery Available for Larger Parties

New Years Eve Party

Join us at the 'Shoe this New Year

And Join the Fun and Games

Buffet and Music

Book Now to avoid

Disappointment