

ale

Cambridge & District Branch Newsletter Issue 378 August 2016



Heart of the Community
The Poacher at Elsworth



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Pub News

We begin this issue of Pub News with a report that Punch Taverns has announced it is to sell off 400 pubs. The report, which was published in The Morning Advertiser, suggests that the PubCo will be offering properties for sale on a 'pub by pub' basis over the next 4 years. If not entirely welcome, this could be seen to be a positive move by the company which last year sold off a tranche of 158 pubs, many of which have already been converted into convenience stores, to 'Property Investor' New River Retail. The gradual sell off should enable communities and individuals to buy and to save their local. Let's hope that Greene King, reported in The Times as having 90 'less profitable' pubs for sale, will follow Punch's lead.

When is a community pub not a community pub? Answer: When it is within Cambridge city boundary.

In what to us are completely arbitrary decisions, Cambridge City planners have refused to issue Asset of Community Value status to both The Hopbine, Fair Street and The Castle, Castle Street on the grounds that serving the community is 'not part of their core business' Even more worrying, documents obtained by a Freedom of Information request suggest that city planners wish to dissuade communities from registering their pubs as community assets. We are seeking a meeting with senior council officers asking for clarity on this bizarre position.

Summer has arrived and a number of our local pubs have taken the opportunity to celebrate with a beer festival. It is a busy time for CAMRA volunteers who make a point of attending and reporting back on as many festivals as we can. Beer festivals that have already occurred include The Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street, which quite frankly with the numbers of beers on offer has a beer festival every day.



The Haymakers, Chesterton staged their first ever beer festival in July.

Branch Diary

Don't forget that all Branch members are very welcome to attend the monthly business meetings.

Tue 13-Sep : 8:00, Open Branch Meeting, Poacher, Elsworth

Tue 11-Oct : 8:00, Open Branch Meeting, Blue Ball, Grantchester

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Pub News continued



The Blue Lion, Hardwick, whose website declares: "Whether you're a foodie, a traditionalist or even a real ale

enthusiast, we might just be the hostelry you have been looking for", is a bit off our beaten track, but is well worth a visit. The festival featured a number of local beers and ciders, all on our visit in excellent condition.



Good reports too about the Alexandra Arms, Gwydir Street, who's beer festival helped raise money for a

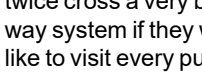
local charity. The 'Alex' recently reported that there had been a small fire in the garden shed. As a result the garden had to be closed for a few days but the incident was "nothing serious".



If only the same could be said of The Tivoli, Mitcham's Corner. Local reports suggest that the owners, Wetherspoon, have lost the appetite for rebuilding the pub, which suffered a destructive fire in March 2015. This will come as a big disappointment to those of us who considered this to be by far the better of the two Wetherspoon's pubs.



Staying on Mitcham's Corner, the news that planners would like to pedestrianize the whole area must come as a welcome boost to The Portland Arms, The Waterman and The



Boathouse, whose customers currently have to twice cross a very busy one way system if they would like to visit every pub.



Future local festivals include The Railway Vue, Histon, which will be holding the Chivers Jam Music and Beer Festival over the weekend beginning 26th August.



Also beginning on the 26th August, The Jolly Millers Cottenham will be hosting their 2nd beer and cider festival,

featuring live music, real ales and ciders, and a bouncy castle!

We are mentioning three pubs called The Red Lion in this pub news. The first, The Red Lion,



Histon is hosting The 18th Histon Beer Festival from the 5th -9th September, followed by a ticket only

German Oompah evening on Saturday 10th September. The profits from this festival go towards funding village charities and activities.

Our second Red Lion, once in Toft, has been closed for a long time and is now a Chinese restaurant. This hasn't stopped the villagers from holding a beer and cider festival. This year will be their 12th. It runs from 2nd September and is held in the village social club.



Finally, if there was an award for the hardest working landlord and landlady I am

certain that Hazel and Steve Bowles of The Red Lion, Kirtling would be in the frame. The couple who have this year received a Good Food Award, are holding a one day Beer and Gin Festival on 28th August.

Congratulations to Sam and his team at The Salisbury Arms, which has been shortlisted as one of five Best Managed pubs of the year by the Great British Pubs Awards selectors.



Congratulations too to The Falcon, Huntingdon, which was awarded the title of Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year. The runners up were two excellent pubs, The Crown Ashley, and The Drayman's Son, Ely. The Falcon now goes on to regional judging.

And from our correspondents

The Mill, Mill Lane is holding a battle of the brewers season, asking customers to judge their favourite beers from the 1st to the 30th September. The Mill will be holding a beer festival from the 10th to the 17th October.



The King's Head Sawston has a new manager. We believe this is a temporary arrangement and a new tenant is being sought.



Staying in Sawston, The Greyhound has had a lick of paint and The Black Bull is running a beer festival at the end of August.



award winning pub is still very much a community pub.

Rhode Island (formerly The Unicorn) Cherry Hinton has reopened as Cofifteen following a refurbishment. It will only open Tuesday to Sunday until 4:30pm and there's no mention of beer.



The Back Street Bistro, (formerly The White Hart) Sturton Street is now owned by The City Pub Company. It is rumoured that the kitchen will be moved upstairs. We wonder if the original name might be reintroduced...?

2nd to 4th September is Soapbox weekend in Duxford. As well as soapbox go-cart derbies there are events at the Plough and the John Barleycorn with Cancer Research benefiting.

Brewery News



Calverly's Brewery, Hooper St has applied for and received an extension to their licence which will allow them to open

to the public Thursday and Friday evenings as well as all day Saturday. At present they will only be opening on Fridays and Saturdays.

Turpin's Brewery, currently a micro brewery in The Med, Perne Road, is moving to larger premises in Sawston due to increased demand for its beers.

Old Friends Brewery has a new, and rather confusing website



Well done to The Cambridge Brewing Company, housed in The Cambridge Brew House, King Street, whose Chicken Porter,

shared the title of Cambridge Beer Festival Beer of the Festival with Harvey's Prince of Denmark.

Lost pubs of Cambridge(shire)

Not many replies to the last one, but well done to Pete Davis and Alan Davis, who dug out their magnifying glasses and identified the former Globe on Newmarket Road.



Once a popular pub, especially on match days (being the nearest pub to the Abbey Stadium), increased trouble during the 1980s meant that it had to stop trading on Saturdays, which needless to say had a devastating effect on trade. I remember going to see bands there a couple of times in the early 1990s, by which time it was definitely getting run down, and it closed in 1995.

Things had started brightly, though. It first appears in 1830, licensee one Thomas G Burbage, and the address then was given as Barnwell Turnpike. It was right next to the toll house, and no doubt many thirsty and hungry travellers took refreshment there – and possibly also accommodation if they arrived after the gate had shut, while waiting to enter Cambridge.

By 1847 it had come into the hands of one Thomas Evans, who started brewing on the site in 1854. He was succeeded in 1865 by (presumably) his son, Francis Evans. He rebuilt the brewery in 1871, and some of these buildings can still be seen in the yard at the rear. He died in 1883 and the brewery was put up for sale, but there the tale seems to come to an end.

It seems that he concentrated on the brewing side of the operation, as in 1875 the licensee is listed as Frederick James Burton. Interestingly,

in the same directory listing the pub is named the Paper Mills Inn. (The adjoining house has also been known as Papermills.) Paper-making had certainly once been a prominent activity in this area, although production had long-since ended sometime in the early 17th century. But the memory of it seems to have remained.

In the early 20th century that fine old game quoits was played in the yard, the pub team competed in a league which included the Dog & Pheasant, the Gas Works, the Pike & Eel, the British Queen and the Salisbury – all but one now lost.

OK, here's another one, old but gold (there's a clue for you):



As usual: Where is/was it? What was it called? Do you remember it when it was still a pub?

We'd like to find out more about all our lost pubs, so if you have any memories of it – and even better, photos of when it was still open – please contact pub-history@cambridge-camra.org.uk.

More next time.

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The Elsworth Poacher



January 2016

We had just seen in the New Year, everyone was full of optimism for the year ahead - yet in Elsworth - the curtains are shut, the lights are switched off, the doors are locked and a 'To Let' sign is prominent in the garden!

One of the most picturesque pubs in our region was once again under the threat of closure. The most recent tenants had decided, rather suddenly one would assume, that this pub was not for them and the keys had been handed back to Punch Taverns, one of the big pub companies that operate in our country.

We feared for the future of this lovely rural public house.

March 2016

... Jump forward three months and I popped into the newly opened pub, which was under the stewardship of the pub landlord - David Taylor.

The pub had been in a bit of a decline since Neil and Caroline Humphreys left a year previously to take on the resurgent White Swan at nearby Conington. So how did the new landlord, David Taylor, get to hear about the opportunity to run the Poacher at Elsworth?

David explained that he'd been in the trade for over 26 years and his passion revolved around running village pubs.

His last venture was at the King's Head, Hadstock near to Linton on the Essex and Cambridgeshire border – unfortunately for him

the owners, gave him four days' notice of their intent to close the pub even though David had turned it into a very successful business! This news came on 22nd December – he got a short stay of execution but the pub was finally boarded up on the 31st January this year, despite it having an Asset of Community Value (ACV) status – the local residents of Hadstock are currently trying to raise the funds to purchase the pub as a community consortium.

David also runs a pub consultancy business where he specialises in keeping traditional pubs open and through those contacts he was made aware of the availability of the Poacher. The lease is still being finalised but he hopes it will all be signed off in the next month or so and the 'vacant' signs can then come down and he can get down to doing what he does best.

David said that the state of the pub when he arrived was in the top three of all the pubs he has worked in throughout his career in the industry – for uncleanness! The kitchen was filthy; the cellar was in an awful state and the beer lines were in a disgusting condition. It took him and his team 10 days to get the place in shape to be able to start serving beer again and a further three weeks before the kitchen could be used to prepare food – they started serving food towards the end of March.



I asked David what plans he had for the pub and for the local residents of Elsworth. He said that he wants it to be a proper pub where locals and

visitors alike can come in and be assured of a warm welcome. The plan is to have three real ales (nothing stronger than 4.5%) on, during the summer months - maybe going back to just two during the quieter winter months but time will tell – hopefully there won't be any quieter months and he can keep three beers on all the time; he also has Aspalls Cyderkyn on hand pump.



Hopefully, in the future, working with Punch, the 'SIBA' Scheme will be introduced at The Poacher.

David sees this as a bit of a 'destination' venue. Cycling groups and walking parties will be made more than welcome in this picturesque pub.



Punch Taverns have already begun £15k of work to restore the garden area in readiness for the great British summer, which is a

good sign of their intent to keep the pubs doors open.

During the winter and spring months the pub will open every weekday at 12:00 – 14:30 and then 17:00 – 23:00 in the evenings. At weekends the pub will be open all day both Saturday and Sunday.

I took the opportunity to ask David what his views were on the Asset of Community Value status, bearing in mind what went on at the King's Head. His response was I think in line with the opinion of many CAMRA members – he thinks they still need some work to be done on them, they're not the finished article yet – the fact that they got 'beefed up' recently was a very good thing as it gave them some teeth but, they still need to be tweaked a bit.



The King's Head at Hadstock didn't give the locals enough time to prepare themselves as the notice to quit was

so short; with the pub now boarded up it is making it even more difficult for a community buyout scheme. With a building as old as the King's Head it will only take a few months before it falls into a state of disrepair and people will soon be calling for 'something to be done with the eyesore' – they're not in a good position, hopefully something will be able to be done to save the pub, but I'm afraid it does look doomed.

July 2016

David has signed a five year lease with Punch



Taverns, the pub has been revamped, the garden substantially improved and a new branding exercise has taken place.



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Back To Square One

A new football season is upon us and I ask myself: *Where would be the best place to play football?* Immediately Wembley springs to mind, closely followed by a beach somewhere in Rio de Janeiro and possibly The San Siro Stadium in Milan. These are all great but none of them are in Cambridge and they are not easily in reach of a decent pub either!



A less famous location for football (but arguably as important) is bang in the middle of Cambridge: Parker's Piece, the birthplace of the modern rules of association football. The Cambridge Rules were drawn up in 1848, later to be

adopted by the Football Association in 1863. Until recently a plaque appeared on a tree in the fire station corner but it has disappeared...

It is early July and I am about to play in one of many informal kick arounds on this hallowed turf. Before the game however, I must take on fluids, so I try **The Grain and Hop Store** (Map: 1) along Regent Terrace.



This is the only pub visible directly from our game.

This Greene King pub, formerly The Avery, pleasingly serves many Locale beers among its 6 real ales. The barman offers me a small taster



of Tydd Steam's unpronounceable Stjärnskådare (4.2%); I like it and am then presented with a frothing dimpled pint jug. It is a golden best bitter and has a

refreshing burnt orangey taste to it.

This must surely be one of Cambridge's largest pubs, and given its selection of beers and friendliness of staff I can see why. It also affords great views of Parker's Piece. If you happen to be by the window about an hour or so later you will see a lovely solo effort as I ghost down the right wing latching onto a well weighted pass, dummieing to cross, slipping past the final defender to then beat the unfortunate keeper at his near post. I have still got it!

In true tradition, a celebratory pint is required and I therefore visit **The Live and Let Live** (Map: 2) a couple of minutes' walk south in Mawson Road. An old favourite, the pub admittedly looks a little run down on the outside, but the interior is as welcoming and comfortable as ever with wood panelling all around. Usually there are 7 or more real ales on offer including the Oakham's Green Devil IPA and Nethergate's Umbel Ale. I love this beer, which at 3.8% is perfect for a post-game drink, delicately floral and clear as a bell. Back of the net! The 'Live' offers plenty of reading material including an often-amusing chalkboard in the gents' toilets.



Seeing as I am so close, I also nip into **The Six Bells** around the corner in Covent Garden. (Map: 8) Five beers are available and I choose a

pint of Truman's Rio Gold (4.2%) at £3.85. I am pleased by the multimedia artwork, which adorns the walls of this lively local. I am amazed at the high number of blue plaques attached to the surrounding houses, denoting that they once housed someone of importance.

The end of July brings another game of what I call 'Pick Up Football'. Most games on Parker's Piece are pretty informal and it is easy to join in. I relish playing here not only because of the sense of history but also enjoy the variety of people I end up playing with. Some of the continental skills are quite dazzling, but I am still a fan of the simple pass to feet...



This week I pop in to **The Cricketers** (Map: 3) along Melbourne Place just across Parkside. Their new pagoda or *Secret Garden* is now in place, and very impressive it is! Kurt

serves me a cracking pint of Pleasant Blonde (4.2%) from The Dark Horse Brewery in Lincolnshire.



On arrival at Parker's Piece I find I am too early for football, so decide to pop into **The Clarendon Arms** (Map: 5). This Greene King house has four beers of

which two are guests. I pay £3.60 for a pint of Greene King IPA (3.6%), which has a tangy honey quality – this is a very well kept beer indeed. I am disappointed that there is no Greene King XX Mild as this used to be an *ever present*. As it is the second test against Pakistan, I am also surprised that there is no cricket on TV. (In fact I can't see a screen anywhere.) One feature that does please me is the rear patio, which I discover to be a real suntrap.

My two beers have set me up nicely for a run around. I start in goal then move into defence maintaining a walking pace, sweeping up and starting attacks. Later in the game I try a few forward runs but it is too hot for me today. (Parker's Piece will also boast a huge age range of players; sadly I am usually the oldest...)



Taking it easy I then decamp to **The Cambridge Blue** (Map: 4), a slightly longer walk down Mill Road, then left onto Gwydir Street. There are many beers on

offer here. Ben pours my Old Brown Mouse (4.2%) from the Three Blind Mice Brewery (near Ely), which is a lovely biscuity best bitter with an added hoppy bite – a superb balanced beer!



It is now early August, and I visit **The Free Press** (Map: 6). Of the 7 beers on hand pump, 3 are Greene King with 4 guests. I am delighted

to see Greene King XX Mild (3%) so no other choice is to be made. This hard to find beer is a classic: deliciously dark with hints of berries.



It is a short walk along Prospect Row to Orchard Street to find **The Elm Tree** (Map: 7). There are 10 beers on tap, as well as

an enormous range of Belgian beers. I marvel at the hat collection on the ceiling and also learn that their most expensive Belgian bottle is £45! I am nevertheless happy with my £3.50 pint of Banks and Taylor Dark Mild (3.8%), which has a superbly dark caramel head and looks almost too good to drink.



The Duke of Cambridge, East Road (Map: 9) serves 3 real ales. I go for a Greene King IPA. The beer is clear and crisp;

jolly good value at £3.15. I did not realise just how big this pub is. It has a pleasant conservatory and patio to the rear. I do find the music a little loud but this does nothing to detract from my beer.

Walking back to Parkers Piece I enjoy the panoramic view which surrounds the historic green. Cambridge is lucky to have such a freely accessible area in the middle of town, and while we are playing football it is not uncommon to see the odd game of Rounders or 'Frisbee' being played. Of course, whatever the sport, all players need to look out for passing cyclists, but

Back To Square One

where in Cambridge does that danger not apply?

Today's game is affected by a strong wind from the west, but the sun is still burning through.



After a somewhat anonymous display from yours truly, I thirstily head to the recently opened **Old Bicycle Shop** in Regent Street (Map: 10) but feel somewhat underdressed for this bar/eatery.

Instead I pop over the road to the **Prince**



Regent (Map: 11) for a quick pint before heading home. This pub to me looks quite dark from outside, so I am taken aback at how light it is. (Unless

a bus stops outside.) Three real ales are on offer here, and I go for 3.8% Sadler's Jack's Pale Ale

for £3.70. This beer is hoppy and crisp, but a little too lemony for my liking. The music is quite loud here and I begin to wonder if The Prince Regent and The Duke of Cambridge are twinned.

And so the football season begins. As I sup my JPA, I think about the beautiful game and wonder what is in store for us this season. Teams will win, lose or draw. There may even be the occasional abandonment. But the game is basically the same... There is a match on TV right now, from Brazil. It is reported that there are only 200 spectators for an Olympics group D game. I wonder if they know where 'Square One' is?

Fred Laband, who in creating this article, drew around a beer mat.

Fred Laband



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Cambridge Beer Festival



The 43rd Cambridge Beer Festival was another record festival. Over 41,000 people came through the door - around the

same number as the previous highest ever attendance, back in 2012.

This year was a record year for beer sales, with over 85,000 pints of British beer being sold - along with the cider and foreign beer well over 100,000 pints were consumed.

The beer of the festival had joint winners this year - Cambridge Brewing Company's Chicken Porter and Harvey's Prince of Denmark shared first place. In third place Siren's Broken Dream.

As well as the beer of the festival, there are also awards for ciders, perries and meads. Cider of the festival was Simon's COX!!!, and the perry award went to Apple Cottage's Pyder Buldock.

The mead of the festival went to a Scottish producer, Rookery mead. They were new to the festival this year, and won the award with their Spruce mead.

This year's festival charity was the Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust, who support our local Addenbrooke's hospital. The hospital is celebrating it's 250th year. They managed to raise over £16,000 - another new record for the festival. That money will go towards making Addenbrooke's a better place for patients, families and staff.



None of this would be possible without the efforts of the nearly 500 volunteers who organise and run the festival, some of whom put in many

weeks of their time. We still need more

volunteers though - on Friday & Saturday we had to close bars temporarily due to not having the people to run it.

Next year's festival will be the 22-27 May 2017 - please consider helping out, even if you can only do a few hours. We also need people to help organise the festival - if you're interested, please get in touch.

As well as the festival in May, Cambridge & District CAMRA also organise two smaller festivals. Our Octoberfest is 14-15 October and our Winter Ale Festival is in January, both at the University Social Club. Further details: www.cambridgebeerfestival.com

Bert Kenward

Festival Organiser

organiser@cambridgebeerfestival.com

Beer of the festival for #cbf43 has joint winners.

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A Brown Study

For our first foreign beer excursion we opted for a city break in watery Amsterdam, a place famous for its fabulous brown cafés. Three quarters of our clan were in attendance and having departed variously from Belfast International, Stansted and Gatwick we successfully rendezvoused at the National Monument in Dam Square at lunch time on Tuesday for a three day festival of art and ale.

Although cycling is a favoured mode of transportation in the city there is an excellent tram system for those of a less active bent. For us, with fewer cars on the streets than would be evident in the UK and flat terrain, Shanks' pony was the preferred means of exploring the city and we did so with gusto.



De Sluyswacht

Each day was built around at least one major cultural visit. No one visiting Amsterdam should fail to go to the Rijksmuseum to wonder at the works of Rembrandt and Vermeer, and three masterpieces in particular: Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, Frans Hals' appropriately titled *The Merry*

Drinker and Jan Pieneman's gigantic *Waterloo*. The Van Gogh Museum comes a close second with its astonishing collection of Vincent's work from every period of his life and creative development. We queued for a hypothermic one and a half hours at Anne Frank's House and, whilst the story of Anne is rightly mythologised for its powerful poignancy and pathos, the experience was disappointingly bathetic.

Around these artistic and historical landmarks, we sampled a huge range of brown cafés and some exquisite oriental cuisine. Brown cafés are typically medieval pubs with snug interiors



Café 't Mandje

as dark as a Rembrandt palette. Mostly, they are down safe side streets and are cosy and intimate. The wooden tables may be scattered with candles, cobwebs and sawdust are commonplace, and the lighting is invariably restrained and moody. They are authentic, atmospheric and anachronistic. We tackled many of them in zones over our three days.



Outside De Dokter

Near Dam Square pop into De Blauwe Parade, a grand bodega with a magnificent Delft tile tableau, for a delicious local beer called Brouwerij 't IJ before visiting three highly recommended quintessential brown cafés – Le Belgique, De Drie Fleschjes and the incomparable De Dokter. In our view, this is the Brown Café nonpareil. It is minute, serves a magnificent cheeseboard for four euro, has well priced beer, plays endless cool jazz and has the most insouciant barman in pub history. The rest rooms are accessed via a scary corkscrew staircase. Don't miss it!

Close to the Red Light District, in Chinatown, there is a trio of outstanding brown cafés along the same street about thirty yards from one another. Each has a different atmosphere. One, Café 't Mandje, plays soul music and has a charismatic, capering and crooning bartender; another, the De Roode Laars, provides small buckets of monkey nuts gratis on each table; and, lastly, In 't Aepjen features myriad simian artefacts and serves delectable cheese and meat plates at a snip. This area provides the best value in Amsterdam with three beers at around nine euro.

Near Central Station is In de Wildeman where



Trying Kwak in de Wildeman

we tried the delicious Kwak ale which is served in a mini yard of ale glass suspended in a branded wooden stand. This is an outstandingly friendly pub with some tasty grazing grub and an impressive range of ales. On the canal side, a short distance from Anne Frank's House, try Café't Smalle. Its setting is sublime as is its gorgeous

interior. The situation of this café is only matched by De Sluyswacht, near the brilliant flea market at Waterlooplein where we purchased a woollen flat cap and a shawl the size of Jesus Green, both for nineteen euro.

As we made our way to our hotel on our last evening we strolled down the massive Prinsengracht and dropped in at a number of excellent brown cafés situated at the canal edge. We would particularly recommend Café Het Molenpad. Sample the cheeseboard with cubes of Old Gouda, large pickled onions, gherkins and a mild mustard for dipping. Wash it down with Brand's Slyvester. Delicious! The evening was rounded off at our local, De Wetering, where we imbibed, under the guidance of our affable host, a selection of Jenever on the house in front of a roaring fire chased down by Leffe and La Chouffe.

As well as the aforementioned tipples, some of the best beers were Brand's Imperator, Amstel's Bock and Radler, Westmalle Dubbel, Eem's Best Bitter and Affligem Blond.

For a Kwaking time and some original and genuine Orange culture take a trip to Amsterdam and do it soon.

Claire, Hilary and Mike Andrews

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Apples & Pears

Good Cider as it used to be

Believe it or not, it is nearly 30 years since CAMRA published its first edition of the Good Cider Guide. This book first came out in October 1987, compiled, almost single-handed, by cider enthusiast David Kitton.

He had originally produced an earlier version, published by Virgin, but this was the first time that CAMRA had seriously promoted real cider and perry to the outside world, and it is interesting today to see how the cider industry has changed, by looking at the producers and outlets that were around in those days.

There were around 80 producers listed in the Guide, although there were a lot more that were not included, but nothing like the hundreds of producers that you can find today, and only about a third of them are still going, with some areas having changed dramatically.

One of the most remarkable changes has been in Wales. This country was traditionally a big cider and perry area, but when the Guide came out there were no known producers at all. Look how that has changed today, where there has been a big revival in cider and perry production and now several dozen makers.

Similarly Dorset, another traditional cider area, has taken off again recently with a whole range of new producers. When this Guide was published, there were only two, and neither of them are still producing. Mill House at Overmoigne is now a museum, and has one of the most amazing collections of cider presses to be found anywhere. Likewise, Captain Thimbleby at Wolfeton House no longer produces, but the eccentric medieval and Elizabethan house is open to the public (at least it was the last time I checked).

There were, of course, a number of producers who were subsequently bought up and closed down by the big companies. One of them was Symonds in Herefordshire, whose family had been making cider since 1727. But this meant little to Bulmers, who eventually bought them

and closed them down, while still making a keg cider called Symonds Scrumpy Jack. Likewise, Bulmers did the same with Inch's in Devon, who had been making cider since the beginning of the 1900s. Once again, bought up and closed down. (See, it isn't just breweries that do it).

Those of you who have heard of Brogdale in Kent, who have the national collection of apple and pear trees, may not know that the cider apples and perry pears were originally at the Government-funded Long Ashton research Station in Bristol, and they made their own cider as well.

In the East of England there was James White Suffolk Cider, no longer producing. When this Guide came out, it seemed that every other pub in East Anglia was selling it. And in Herefordshire, Westons was still producing and seen in many pubs throughout the country. But by far the largest number of outlets with cider (including a lot of off-licences) were stocking Bulmers, so some things never change! Indeed, in those days Bulmers had even owned a small number of their own cider houses, which were sold off. The one at Quatt in Shropshire is the only one still open, although now independent.

But the list of producers who are no more is a long one. A lot of cider makers were also farmers, and cider had been made for generations, and when they retired or died there was often no-one to take over the business. But luckily, as well as the hundreds of new producers, some of the family businesses are still there. So you can still say hello to makers like Roger Wilkins (Wilkins Cider, Somerset) and Derek Hartland (Hartlands Cider Farm, Gloucestershire) both cider makers in the old tradition, while welcoming all of the new ones as well.

And I hope that they don't mind me saying this, but thank goodness that a lot of the newer producers are just as eccentric as the old ones!

Mick Lewis

Apples & Pears

Jerry Ladell meets Ben Ackers



Ben Ackers manages the day-to-day running of the Cambridge Blue on Gwydir Street, one of Jethro and Terri Scotcher-Littlechild's ever-growing empire of local pubs. When the 'Blue' was awarded the 2016 title of Cambridge CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year, Jethro was quick to point out that

Ben was responsible for them winning their award.

I decided to pop along and have a word with Ben to find out a little bit more about his love of cider and what it was that brought him to the Blue....

So Ben, tell me about how you came to end up working for Jethro and Terri at the Cambridge Blue?

I started in the pub trade working for the Kingston Arms in 2008 after graduating from university. The recession was still in full swing so I thought I'd get myself a pub job to tide me over for a bit – seven or eight years later – it's going quite well I suppose!! After a while I came over here to help out at one of the Blue beer and cider festivals, liked it, handed in my CV, and eventually began working here full time.

Then I moved over to Norwich for a few years to the White Lion on Oak Street, which is a Milton Brewery pub – with my wife to be Becky, we got married in Cambridge, whilst still living in Norwich and had the reception here in the Cambridge Blue, so there's a bit of a historical (and perhaps romantic) link with the place. I was born in Cambridge, my parents used the Blue when they lived in Ainsworth Street and it was a frequent stop off on walks when I was a baby.

While we were at the White Lion I kept in touch

with Terri and she said she was looking for somebody to come in on a more general scale, we were offered a joint management package. It took some careful consideration, as the White Lion was our baby, but we felt that a move to the Blue was a career move we couldn't refuse.

Under our management the White Lion had become a cider destination pub. It started slowly, over a long period we gradually increased the number of ciders until it became known as Norwich's premier cider pub – it is still running along the same lines now, it's just a bit tidier.

What is the appeal of cider and perry to you – why have you decided to specialise on these fruit based drinks?

Cider and perry are the unsung heroes of the British drinking culture. Originally a farm worker's drink, they were very much part of agricultural society, which ties in well with East Anglia. It's nice to see them being brought into line with beer in terms of popularity – the so-called craft beer movement has been great for cider in that what used to be seen as a cheaper option has been elevated to premium status.

The increase in new producers, certainly in Cambridge, works well with the craft movement. Cider is now getting a lot more appreciation because people are more open minded about drinks so producers are happy to try different techniques, blends and cask-maturing. Consistency and variety are now appreciated in equal measure across beer and cider. (At this point we were briefly interrupted by a call from Crones Cider asking Ben how many tubs he needed this week – Ben was keen to point out that Crones, from Kenninghall outside Norwich, was one of his favourite local ciders – he ordered two!).

Cider appears to be becoming popular with the younger generation – do you have any explanation or theory as to why there has been this recent increase of interest, is it to do with the

Apples & Pears

added fruits you now see regularly in bottle-shelves across the country?

Personally, I believe cider is sold as a product that does exactly what it says on the tin – some ciders do have added fruits, but mainly what we sell is apple cider. We do though, on occasion, sell a cherry bomb which is really sharp cherry flavour – I try to keep a mix of sweet, medium and dry ciders available and when my customers come in they are not expecting to see me selling a number of added fruit ciders. I have a cider in at the moment, 'double-vision' strawberry cider, which is a lot sweeter – I just add it into the sweet range and don't sell it based on the strawberries. Perries are usually sweeter. You can get some nice dry ones but you have to look hard to find them.

The Magners over ice campaign helped to make cider popular again, but it is the the Craft movement that catapulted it to new heights. People love local cider, we offer around 7 ciders and perries and try to keep 3 or 4 of those from Cambridgeshire. "Crone's is very popular; their Rum Cask is pretty much the best barrel-aged cider in East Anglia in my opinion".

Can you see a time in the future where we may see a specialist cider and perry pub in Cambridge?

There are a few cider pubs around, but they're hard to find. There isn't one in Cambridge – a few years ago there was an attempt to open a cider pub in King Street, but it was refused at the licensing stage – locals objected and the license was not granted.

You can't rule it out but it is very unlikely – maybe a micro pub that diversifies may be the best opportunity – look at what has happened with Thirsty on Mitcham's Corner – they've managed to crossover with beer and wine. Similarly Bacchanalia off sales on Mill Road – they sell a lot of cider.

But by far the best bet for cider drinkers is to find a good pub that sells cider. CAMRA's support of cider is vital to keeping the initiative going.

Jerry Ladell meets Ben Ackers ... continued

Simon's Cider recently produced a cider that was available at the Cambridge Beer Festival called East Meets West (which was very nice!) – can you explain the main differences between east and west country ciders?

The way people do it at beer festivals is to ask a potential customer if they have sugar in their tea (eastern) or do they let their tea brew for a long time (western) – that gives an indicator as to whether they like cider with strong tannins – the west country ciders are likely to have more tannins and the eastern region ciders are more fruity softer tasting ciders. When we offered Simon's 'East meets West' it flew out and we had to order more straight away. It shows that you can blend the two quite different cider types very well.

What is your ultimate goal in the pub business?

My main aim is to continue to build up the profile of the Blue but to also look to unify the other pubs in the Jethro and Terri portfolio. We are trying to help each other make progress – for instance somebody comes in here and asks for a pizza, we'll send them down the road to the Blue Moon – as they do superb pizzas; we have a barbecue here this evening – it's advertised in all the other pubs...

Personally I would like to see some local keg cider in here – the Blue Moon is showing some interest – we want to complement each other wherever we can. Consolidate and continue to make progress is the way I want the business to develop. We are renowned for our range of ales; we're now becoming recognised as a very good cider outlet too.

Do you have a personal favourite cider or perry – if you do; which one would you opt for?

Personal favourites Crone's, Simon's and Pickled Pig are fine, Angry Wasp is my favourite bottle conditioned cider, although we also sell Cromwell's Oliver's Sweetheart. West Croft,

Jane't Jungle Juice, and Hecks have been making cider for 6 generations, since 1841. Chris Rouse – CAMRA Regional Cider co-ordinator for East Anglia - always tries to source as many different ciders as he can for the Cambridge Beer festival – he's been great in promoting our local East Anglian cider producers – about 60% of the ciders available were from East Anglia.

For my honeymoon, Becky and I did a West Country cider tour and tried some lovely ciders: Mark Venton in Devon does a straw pressed cider – which is very rare these days and is very laborious, 'bloody' hard work – to produce. He keeps us updated with what he's up to. From the customers point of view it is definitely worth it though, you can really taste the difference.

Have you ever attempted to make your own Cider? If you haven't, is it something you might try in the future?

I'd like to but there is only so much you can do in a small two bedroom flat in Trumpington! I rely on people like Simon (Simon's Cider) and the other Simon (SoCider), we often chat about it but that's as far as it goes, for the moment...

Time for the plug – tell us what you have to offer at the Blue and what we can expect to find at the other pubs in Jethro and Terri's empire (Blue Moon, Royal Standard and The Three Horseshoes at Stapleford)?

Blue Moon does quite a lot of music nights; there is going to be a big refurb' of that pub, which will make a huge difference – you heard it here first folks! Richard, formerly of the Backstreet Bistro has now taken over the kitchen at the Royal Standard. We have a few things scheduled here at the Blue but nothing concrete by way of dates yet – a lot of new beers and new ciders are being introduced – so watch this space. The main aim is to improve the range of ciders we offer, getting the balance between east and west – lots more from Simon's Cider and SoCider next year. We have a very good wholesaler on board – Mark of Dragon Drinks, Sudbury. (Shouts out please, to Mark at Dragon Drinks; Chris Rouse and Alex Waters at the White Lion, Norwich and last but by no means

least my wife Becky who introduced to me to cider).

Finally Ben, what is your take away message to try to entice people to come and have a go at this delicious drink called cider?

There has never been a better time to try cider and perry in Cambridge. More pubs are stocking it and more people are making it. Come to The Blue and give it a go, we'll find something you like. Also, if you have any spare apples that might otherwise go to waste, we can give them a good home if you get in touch!

Interview by Jerry Ladell during which I sampled a rather delicious SoCider Re-Discovery 6.6% – very enjoyable Cheers!

Jerry Ladell



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The Cambridge Brewhouse, King Street, 10% off Cambridge Brewing Company Beers.

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The Golden Hind, Milton Road, 10% off a pint.

The Hopbine, Fair Street, 10% off a pint.

The Kingston Arms, Kingston Street, 20p off a pint.

The Maypole, Portugal Place, 20p off a pint.

The Mill, Mill Lane, 10% off a pint.

The Pickerel, Magdalene Street, 10% off a pint.

The Portland Arms, Chesterton Road 10% off a pint.

The St Radegund, King Street, 30p off a pint

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Beer Festivals Page

AUGUST:

19-20 Soham Charity Beer & Music Festival
19-21 Cock Beer Festival, Hemingford Grey
23-27 Peterborough Beer Festival
26 Railway Vue Beer Festival, Impington
26-28 Black Bull Beer Festival, Sawston
26-28 Jolly Millers Beer Festival, Cottenham
26-28 Reepham Beer Festival, Norfolk
26-29 Summer Beer Festival, Three Horseshoes, Stapleford
26-29 King of The Belgians Mini Beer Fest, Hartford
26-28. Three Tuns, Fen Drayton. Beer, cider & gin festival.
27-29. Fox, Burwell. Beer festival.
28 Red Lion, Kirtling
28-29 Chequers Summer Beer & Music Festival, Orwell

SEPTEMBER

2-4 Toft Beer Festival
5-9 Red Lion Beer Festival, Histon
8-11. Jesus Green, Cambridge. Oktoberfest (not CAMRA)

9-11 Plough Beer Festival, Shepreth
16-23 Bottisham British Legion
17 Bourn Beer & Music Festival, Manor Farm, Bourn
22-25 Chestnut Tree, West Wrating
22 – 2 Oct Cask Ale Week
22 – 2 Oct MusicALE Festival at The Greyhound, Sawston
23-25 Cambridge Craft Beer Festival, Leisure Park, Cherry Hinton Road

OCTOBER:

6-8 Huntingdonshire CAMRA Booze on the Ouse, St Ives Beer & Cider Festival, Burgess Hall
10-16 Mill, Mill Lane, Octoberfest
14-15 Cambridge CAMRA Oktoberfest, University Social Club, Mill Lane, Cambridge
24-29 Norwich Beer Festival

NOVEMBER

24-26 Beerhouse Winter Beer Festival, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

DECEMBER

3 Mill Road Winter Fair



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Still a Champion at 51

Last year saw very jolly 50th birthday celebrations for a grain variety. An unusual subject for festivities, but Maris Otter, the breed in question, has been bringing satisfaction to the taste buds of beer lovers since 1965. This specialist variety has been an ingredient in 10 of the most recent 16 Champion Beers of Britain. This harvest-time, Maris Otter's remarkable resilience gives further reason to celebrate.

The weather has not been kind to this year's winter barley crops. Mainstream varieties have taken something of a bashing. But North Norfolk's Maris Otter crop has distinguished itself with what Tom Rivett of H Banham described as "its champion qualities."

"Despite the rain, lack of sunshine and challenging growing conditions, most of the Otter grains have reached optimum size and are, as always, perfect for malting and craft brewing. Looking at the state of the other crops, this is some achievement," says Rivett, "and another proof - if proof were needed - of Maris Otter's trustworthy resilience.

"What it lacks in yields, Otter more than makes up for in quality and reliability. That is the main reason it has survived an unprecedented 51 years. Most varieties last just four or five years before being superseded by new strains. Maris Otter, an ingredient in hundreds of award-winning ales as well as many Champion Beers of Britain, has literally weathered the storms for half a century.

"It behaves well in the malting process - as the traditional floor maltings at Crisp Malting Group can testify. It is then sought after by an ever-increasing number of craft brewers. They swear by it - for its consistent performance in the mash tun and the depth of flavour it delivers to the beer.

"Even in the years of disappointing harvests, Maris Otter manages to hold on to its champion qualities."

The huge expansion of the craft beer market, alongside the massive growth of interest in food, drink and natural ingredients has heralded a

renaissance in the fortunes of Maris Otter. It is still a specialist variety, making up a relatively small proportion of all the barley grown in Britain - just 2.6% in 2014 and 3.4% in 2015. Of barley that is malted and used for brewing, Maris Otter is a higher proportion, but still less than 10%.

"Maris Otter hardly features in the world of large brewers, but it certainly punches above its weight in the craft sector," says Rivett. "There may still be some way to go before this fantastic variety becomes a household name in the way grape varieties such as Merlot, Shiraz and Chardonnay are, but awareness is growing."

The variety is a cross, created from Pioneer and Proctor back in 1965, and its history is well worth exploring. It rose, declined and nearly died out in the late 1990s - and was then rescued and revived by two grain merchants H Banham and Robin Appel - who now jointly own the rights. The revival involved starting afresh with just a few grains. The purest, most true-to-type Maris Otter seeds were picked out and used for propagation, and onward breeding. To this day, there is still a 'secret plot' where H Banham continues to carry out what must be one of the most regular and rigorous 're-selection' processes in the farming industry.

Rivett says more brewers are talking about ingredients in their marketing and publicity materials, and those who use Maris Otter are proud to talk about it. "Last year's 50th anniversary celebrations put it in the spotlight. They created huge interest among drinkers as well as brewers.

"Conditions in North Norfolk are ideal for growing Maris Otter, and we work with some of the best growers in the country to maintain the purity of the breed and produce excellent quality crops.

"This year's harvest is a testament to their work, as well as to the variety itself. Malt from the overall 2016 crop will be used to create around 450 million pints of Maris Otter beer, a miniscule proportion of which I look forward to sampling in the months to come. Champion prospect!"

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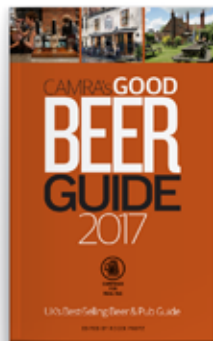
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