

ale

Cambridge & District Branch Newsletter

Issue 368 July/August 2014



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Pub News

It has been an eventful two months (since Ale 367) in the political world that revolves around pubs. In an effort to convince the world that they really do want to keep our pubs open, the government announced new rules designed to protect pub tenants from fat cat pub company greedy demands. These rules give tenants special rights, including the power to request a rent review after 5 years, with further protection for tenants of pub companies that own more than 500 pubs, who will have the right to request a 'parallel free of tie rent assessment'. An independent adjudicator, to whom tenants will be able to complain should their pub company not follow the rules, will oversee this pub company policy.

Understandably, CAMRA have announced this as a "significant victory". We did however admit that there was "still work to do". Indeed, with an estimated 28 pubs closing every week, there is a great deal of work to do.

The problem is that the unfair treatment of tied landlords is just one of the factors causing the demise of our pubs. For some time we have been warning of another great threat to our local pubs – the avaricious property developer.

And, whilst we welcome the reforms to the pub company tie, we should all be very aware that an immediate response from shareholder led pub companies could be to off load poorly managed pubs. Even more cause then for us to be vigilant, and for us to register our local pubs as Assets of Community Value as soon as we possibly can.

Greene King appears to have anticipated the government mood, announcing in early May that they would be selling 275 of their tenanted pubs to new pub company, Hawthorn Leisure. For the tenants of these

Branch Diary

Don't forget that all Branch members are very welcome to attend the monthly business meetings. Those upcoming are (all 8pm)

July Tuesday 8th Open branch meeting, Reindeer, Saxon Street

August Tuesday 12th Open branch meeting, The Poacher, Elsworth

September Tuesday 9th Open branch meeting, The Carpenters Arms, Great Wilbraham.

October Friday 17th and Saturday 18th, Octoberfest beer festival, University Social Club, Mill Lane

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Pub News

Continued...

pubs it may simply be a change of landlord. More worryingly, Greene King are also rumoured to have sold a number of pubs to UK property company, Wrenbridge.



We understand that **The Little Rose, Haslingfield** is one of these pubs. Concerned villagers have registered the pub as an Asset of Community Value, and are seeking a means to buy the pub for the community.



Residents in Hildersham are keeping a close eye on **The Pear Tree**. The pub, which was registered for change of use as a furniture shop a

few months ago, does not appear to have any furniture on sale. This change occurred under the noses of South Cambs Council, who decided not to issue an Article 4 Direction, which would have saved the pub for the community.

Not in our district, but significant enough to mention, the Camden New Journal, has reported that that a local pub, The Old White Bear was saved when Camden council issued an Article 4 Direction. So it can be done...

On to better news: The owners of **The Plough, Shepreth** have announced an open day on Saturday July 5th. Nick Davis and Robin Gumm have big plans for the pub, which they say, will have a "traditional

plus" atmosphere. It was heart-warming to read on their website (www.theploughshepreth.co.uk)



that they feel it is "important to have a good range of quality ale", that community initiatives will include the creation of a family friendly pub, and that rooms would be, "open to village groups".

If like me you thought that The Eraina Greek restaurant, Free School Lane, would go on forever, you will be a little surprised when you next turn up for moussaka, chips and rice. Now owned by Cambs Cuisine, owners of The Chop House and the wonderful Tickell Arms, Whittlesford, it is due to be reborn as the **Smokeworks**. We understand that bottled beers from local breweries will be on offer.

Congratulations to Susie Hinchcliffe of **The Earl Of Beaconsfield**, Mill Road.



According to a pub tweet Susie has been shortlisted in The Great British Pub Awards. I popped in there to watch Spain get thrashed by

Holland (sorry, yes I know it's football), and concluded that it is indeed a pub worth crossing the bridge to get to.



The Crown, Linton, has asked me to remind you that they offer happy hour prices at all times to card carrying CAMRA members.



The **Three Tuns Fen Drayton** has become the latest pub to join the

CAMRA discount scheme, offering CAMRA members 20p off a pint of ale and a 10% reduction on food.



Greene King has refurbished **The Rock, Cherry Hinton Road**. According to our correspondent, a two week closure saw the pub reopen "much the same as it was but with better furniture". 5 real ales were on offer— three of them not Greene King – and the beer quality was very good.



Our Public Relations Officer Ali Cook cycled out to the branch **PUB OF**

THE YEAR The **Chestnut Tree, West Wrattling** to try the new offering from Brandon Brewery. Imaginatively called Black i (5%), this beer is described by the brewery as a fruity porter. Ali liked it.



The **Mill, Mill Lane** recently held a 'battle of the breweries'. Customers were asked to vote for their

favourite beers over a period of ten days, with several Cambridge breweries being represented. I wasn't present at the results evening but I understand that new brewery, **Calverley's** was well supported, as was **Lord Conrad's Brewery**, whose policy of brewing fewer beers to a higher quality really is paying off.

Another Cambridge Brewery making improvements, this time in branding, is the excellent **Moonshine Brewery**. Look out for the snazzy new pump clips and bottle labels! No change to the high quality beer though. Rumour has it that they may have a beer going forward to the Champion beer of Britain awards at The Great British Beer Festival ... watch this space.



I'm really enjoying Cambridge Brewing Company beers at the moment. The new range,

each named after a different staff member of either **The Cambridge Brew House, King Street**, or the Mill, has taken their brewing to another level.

The Brew House recently hosted a book reading by beer writers Jessica Boak and Ray Bailey, who were promoting their new tome, *Brew Britannia*. It was a jolly evening, run along the same lines as a Cambridge CAMRA branch meeting – a free for all discussion about beer. It was very clear that Jess and Ray are fully conversant with the history of real ale – it's worth a read.

And from our correspondents:



The **Flying Pig** held its second annual Pigfest at the beginning of May, a packed pub enjoying a fine day of bands, burgers and beer. Cambridge Moonshine

Pub News Continued...

created a beer for the occasion, Hog Hopper, which landlord Matt Hatfield helped to brew.



The **Three Horseshoes, Stapleford** asked us to inform you that they are once again serving food on

Monday and Tuesday



Community Pub of the Year, **The Blue Ball, Grantchester** has been sold by Punch Taverns to a local resident. We understand that the current lease has 18 months to run, so

hopefully there won't be any changes in the near future.



The **White Swan, Conington** has announced a 2-day beer festival starting on the 1st August.



The **Regal, St Andrews Street**, is hosting another Brewers evening, promoting

Oakhams Brewery on Friday 25th July.

Greene King are seeking a manager for **The Prince Regent, Regent Street**.

It looks likely that the planning application for **The Seven Stars, Newmarket Road** to be turned into a restaurant surrounded by



residential property will be passed. The only change we could find from

the previous application, which had been turned down, was a change of the business title from "restaurant" to "pub".



The **Red Lion Histon** will be holding a German themed beer festival 1st – 6th September. Note that the Saturday session is ticket only. Tickets cost £30 to include food beer and music. Proceeds go to local charities.



The leasehold for **The White Swan, Quay** is for sale at a cost of £70,000. Rent is advertised at £20,000.

The **Exhibition, Over** is on the market with a price tag of £375,000 freehold.

Pub News - Last Orders!

Last orders please! Stop press news from around the Cambridge district



I've just heard from Barry at the Duke of Wellington, Willingham. They have recently bought the freehold of the **Black Bull, Willingham** and are currently refurbishing it. They hope to reopen in mid-August but will confirm closer to the time. He says "needless to say that cask ales will feature heavily in our portfolio!"

The Reindeer, Saxon Street has announced it will be holding an antiques/bric-a-brac fair on the first Sunday of every

month.



Railway Vue, Impington. After 19 years, Sue is leaving in 9 weeks time. Ground

down by Punch she is leaving the trade entirely. Real ales are IPA, Tribute (both regulars) and Northumbrian Gold (Hadrian Border I assume).

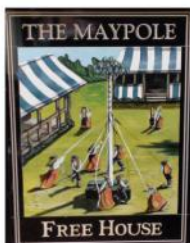


Admiral are going to invest in the **Jolly Millers, Cottenham**. The full length of the garden will be opened up. The beautiful pond is only 1/3 of the way down to the end! They are planning a

beer festival 1st-3rd August and a music event on Sat 30th August.

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Enough talk, let's have some action!

Pubs are still closing at the rate of 28 a week. The government claims to have put in place legislation to address this crisis, but have they? Paul Ainsworth, former Cambridge and District Branch Pubs Officer, addresses the CAMRA AGM:

I'd like to start with some quotes from people who claim to be great friends of our pubs. First, a Mr David Cameron, who says "Our pubs are often at the heart of our communities. The high rate of pub closures is a serious issue and it must come down". Next, our Pubs Minister, Brandon Lewis - "Pubs are at the heart of our communities and this government is determined to help them thrive and grow." He also says, "We are doing everything we can to support and safeguard community pubs from closure." And his boss, Eric Pickles, he says, "I recognise the vital roles pubs play in community life and job creation"

And yet, despite the apparent passion and commitment of these gentlemen, our pubs are closing at the rate of 28 every week. Now, let's be fair. The government has done some positive things to help pubs – around for instance beer tax, rate relief and the pro-pub policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. Also, we know that not all pubs can be saved, especially in the current economic climate. But, and it's a huge but, we continue to see many viable and potentially viable pubs being lost primarily because of loopholes in our planning laws. And who could easily close those loopholes? - well, you've heard their names already.

At the risk of boring those of you who are only too well aware of these loopholes, I'll quickly run through them. As things stand, you don't need planning consent to change a pub into a restaurant, a shop or many types of office. Nor do you need permission to demolish a pub if it isn't in a listed

building or a conservation area. These are known as Permitted Development rights. We've all seen the consequences, most notably the conversions, at the rate of two a week, of local pubs to local supermarkets. Very often, these are well-loved, well-used pubs but their owners – and we know who they tend to be – are happy to grab their many pieces of silver from Tesco and their ilk.

The solution is obvious and easy. Make it necessary to obtain planning permission for any change of use or demolition of a pub. Note that this certainly doesn't mean that such changes can't happen. It just requires that the proposals are subject to proper scrutiny as part of the democratic process and that local people are given the chance to express their views.

What does the government say? It says such changes are unnecessary because safeguards are already in place within the planning system. And what might they be?

Well, they've given us Assets of Community Value, or ACVs. As you'll know, if a pub registered as an ACV is put up for sale then the local community has a six month window to try to put together a bid to buy it. Now, please, whatever you do, don't take what I'm going to say next as a reason not to pursue ACV status for pubs.

ACVs are, in themselves, a good thing and there have been a few instances where local people have been successful in buying a pub. There's also some evidence that ACV status will be viewed, in the jargon, as a "material consideration" by planners. But they are, I'm afraid, a long way from being the answer to our prayers.

ACV status doesn't stop an owner using permitted development rights to change the pub's use or demolish it. It's of no use if the pub has already been sold to a developer. The owner is under no obligation to accept

a reasonable bid by a community group and can always just sit out the six-month moratorium then sell to whoever they want. They can at any time sell the pub as a “going concern” and there's nothing to stop the new owner then shutting it down. So a sufficiently determined owner will easily find a way round any restrictions imposed by ACVs.

When Brandon Lewis says the following, he is being disingenuous to put it mildly: “I will continue to remind local authorities that there are powers that they can use to protect their very important local assets. Getting pubs listed is easy and we should be encouraging areas to do it. It's just that extra bit of protection and confidence that that pub can be there and remain as a community asset”

Also, the government points to Article 4 Directions. At the risk of watching your eyes collectively glaze over, I'll briefly explain or remind you what they are. Essentially they allow Councils to remove the permitted development rights I mentioned earlier so that planning consent **is** needed for change of use or demolition. However, Councils are very reluctant to use these powers, mainly because, as the rules stand, there is a risk that they will be stung for compensation and unsurprisingly that's not a risk they want to take.

These rules could, in fact, be very easily changed and that's already happened for certain kinds of development, like houses in multiple occupation. A tiny adjustment to the regulations means that the compensation risk disappears once a notice period has expired.

Naturally CAMRA has raised this with the government. HQ colleagues met with Brandon Lewis last autumn and asked for these minor regulatory changes. They also suggested another minor change – removing permitted development rights for pubs listed as ACVs – something which would really give ACVs teeth. Mr Lewis

flatly rejected these proposals because they amounted to additional regulation and the government is opposed to any tightening of regulatory control. Indeed, they're heading firmly in the other direction, relaxing controls left, right and centre – so, for instance, you can now temporarily convert a pub to any kind of office without planning consent.

Colleagues, our pubs are being sacrificed on the altar of political dogma – and that isn't acceptable. Over the last few years, including when the previous administration was in power, we've had plentiful dialogue with government about the problems the planning system causes for our pubs. We've heard a lot of fine words but seen precious little meaningful action. The time for such polite dialogue is over – our gloves must come off. We should be shouting loudly and clearly that many of our pubs are being lost as a direct consequence of government refusal to act. The finger of blame must not just be pointed but jabbed in their eye.

The time for a hard-hitting campaign is right. There is an election in just over a year's time. All the parties will be setting out their stalls and we must press them to declare themselves on these issues. In fact, the LibDems have already done so – they recently committed themselves to the removal of permitted development rights for pubs. Let's try to get the other parties to follow suit. And if they decline, we must kick up a heck of a stink and let the British people know who is for protecting our pubs and who isn't. Real ale has never been in ruder health and that's a great achievement for our Campaign over forty years of long slog – but we're faced with having fewer and fewer pubs in which to drink the beer we love. Please support the motion but also please support the strong call for action, which I very much hope will follow on from the NE considering the way forward.

Save our pubs!

The Fountain: not your traditional pub



Ok, I'll admit it. I do feel out of place.

This isn't The Fountain I remembered from my youth.

That older incarnation, nestled in the centre of Regent Street, had a grand

leaded front window. Ok it was a bit grubby inside, but it had character – of a sort.

I seem to remember it smelled a little too, of beer and stale cigarettes mainly, but didn't all pubs in those days?

This Fountain, the one with its window front wide open to passing tourists, has a stainless steel topped bar, designer plastic bucket seats and cube like stools surrounding, long wooden tables.

Apparently it has been like this since 2011 when it was refurbished by The Knight Company into a music pub and late night venue – how did I miss that happening?

So why am I here? Well, on recommendation actually. Lauren, assistant manager of The Mill, said I must go and try the cask beers The Fountain had to offer. She said I wasn't to be put off by the décor and should give it a go.

So I'm here, chatting with Terri, the very bubbly events manager as she takes me through the line of hand pumps evident on the bar.

First I try the two regular beers, Adnams Lighthouse, 3.4% and am instantly

refreshed, followed swiftly by Thornbridge Jaipur, a lot stronger at 5.9% - but by golly it is good! I instantly buy a pint.

There are also two guest beers available, on this occasion Oakhams JHB (3.8%), and Purity Pure UBU (4.5%). I taste both, and they are in good condition. I don't taste the real ciders, but I am happy to report that there are two on tap, an Orchard Pig at 6% and, Cornish Orchards Perry (5%).

Tasting of other beers completed I seat myself beside Terri who is on her laptop, putting together an events diary.

She is keen to tell me about her job – and about the beer. It is a shame I haven't more time because she would like me to taste some of the craft ales they have on offer. Rooster's Londinium Porter, (5%), (I relent and have a taste, it is superb, coffee and hops...), Anarchy IPA, (6.5%), Bear Hug Hibernation (5.2%), or one of the Belgium bottle beers perhaps. I sip my Jaipur, and regretfully decline. I have to cycle home.

It is close to 6pm on a sunny day in July and the pub has attracted some tourists.

Most are sitting by the window, enjoying the fresh air and watching the traffic, but an American couple join me at the bar and we have a conversation concerning the difference between Craft and Real Ale. It is a conversation that has no conclusion but it is pleasant, and we then go our separate ways.

In conclusion: I'm not sure I'm young enough, or fit enough to last a whole session in The Fountain: The pub is open from noon to 3am. But for an afternoon sojourn, or an after work drink on a sunny day, I'd be very happy to return.

It may not be your traditional pub, but the beer is good!

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ALE TRAIL 2014

The Annual Cambridge and District CAMRA Ale Trail, tours of pub in the Cambridge in District area, have become eagerly anticipated items in the local CAMRA diary. Introduced in 2012, the trails were an attempt by your local branch to encourage people to visit local pubs both within Cambridge and in the surrounding villages.

When I saw the list of pubs to be included in the 2014 Ale Trails, I was both surprised and as Chair of the branch, a little red faced, to realise that there were pubs in the area that I had yet to visit. When long term CAMRA campaigner, Carl Woolf, volunteered to lead a bus tour of committed members to these unknown hostelrys I couldn't resist...

The Cambridge CAMRA Ale Trails: In search of Eastern Promise

It was a sunny Saturday morning when fifteen intrepid explorers climbed upon the bus; each of us anticipating what for us would be a tour of discovery.



For many of us this would be the first time we had ventured to the far eastern edge of the branch boundary. Carl Woolf, the tour leader, and several of our more seasoned colleagues assured us that we were in for a treat.

They weren't wrong.

The first pub on our 9 pub (yes, 9 pubs!) tour was **The Crown** in **Ashley**.



According to the Ashley website (www.ashleyvillage.org.uk/crown.html), which quotes from "About Ashley" written in 1994 by Clive Moffat, the earliest record of The Crown was 1712. Many owners later, it was sold to Greene King in 1890. Greene King sold it to current owners, Sarah and Larry McCabe in January this year, and the couple are making the most of their "free of tie" status.

Of the four ales on offer, only one was Greene King, the IPA kept on to satisfy those regulars who can't live without it. The other three, Jo C's Norfolk Kiwi (3.8%), Shortts farm, Skiffle (4.5%), and Mighty Oak, Oscar Wilde mild (3.7%), showed a great deal more imagination, and a welcome commitment to East Anglian breweries. I tried the Oscar Wilde, a treasure trove of caramel and roasted malt, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

The next pub on our tour isn't strictly speaking within our branch boundary, but we were very pleased to take the short



detour to **Dalham** and **The Affleck Arms**.

According to the Dalham website (dalham.com/new/affleck-arms/) the Affleck Arms, built in the sixteenth century, was one of the first buildings erected in the village. The pub is named after Lieutenant General Sir James Affleck (1759 -1833), who was Colonel of the 16th Dragoons, and who owned the estate upon which the pub is sited.



Today it is a bustling “wet sales “ pub. Landlord and owner John Porter used to work for Wetherspoon’s, and his pricing is more than a match for even that august limited company. Every real ale in the pub was on sale for £2 a pint.

Whilst I let you catch your breath, I’ll also explain that unlike some discount pubs I have visited John does not compromise on the quality of his beers. If, unusually, a beer hasn’t sold out within four days, it is sold off at £1 a pint!

The Affleck offers 4 real ales; on this occasion, Nethergate, Suffolk County, 4%; Skinners Lushingtons’ (4.2%), Oakham Inferno (4%) and Elgood’s Black Dog (3.8%).

I tried the very drinkable, if hoppy, Skinners and couldn’t fault it. In all other aspects this is a traditional country pub, complete with an inglenook fireplace, horse brasses, and a welcoming atmosphere

It was soon time for us to travel to the next pub, **The Reindeer**, in the intriguingly named village of **Saxon Street**.



Saxon Street is presumably named after a Saxon settlement, though some historians claim that it may have been named after a Saxon raiding route. The Reindeer is purported to have been named after the deer that used to roam around the land in the 1850’s when the pub was built.

I think it would be fair to say that it is a little run down. Currently open weekends only, it is a former Tolly pub, which was refurbished in 2004, but could do with another lick of paint.

It was recently bought by the founder of Pitfield Brewery, Martin Kemp, who has committed himself to returning the pub to its former glory.

Seven ales were available for our visit, Pitfield Bitter, 4.5%, Dominion, Woodbine Racer (4.2%), Bartram’s Brewery, Imperial Stout (6.9%), Dominion/Billericay Mild with No Name (5.5%), Pitfield Eco Warrior (4.5%).

I enjoyed the sweet/bitter complexity of Pitfield Red (4.8%). This was also the first pub on the tour to offer a real cider, Pickled Pig from Stretham.

Martin is one of the world’s great collectors, something of which we became very aware as we walked into the spacious bar. I have not seen a larger collection of pub memorabilia outside of an auction house. I was delighted to find that it was all for sale and was soon rummaging around looking for a bargain.

Alas, there wasn’t enough time for me to make a purchase, and I had to stop my rummaging to board the bus for the next

ALE TRAIL 2014 *continued ...*



pub, **The Red Lion, Kirtling.**

The Red Lion is a cosy, two-roomed village local. The last pub in the village and a former Greene King pub, it now belongs to Hazel and Steve Bowles, and the couple are working incredibly hard to make it a success.



If the beer is anything to go by they are sure to succeed. Two hand pumps dispensing Nethergate Growler, (3.9%) and, my tipple on this occasion, Adnams' bitter (3.9%). The pub has gained a reputation for good food, and on the recommendation of our guide we tried some specially prepared sandwiches, before moving on to **The Three Black Birds, Woodditton**



The Three Blackbirds is a picture box thatched two bar pub. The public bar has a "farmyard" feel. The tiled floor looks as though it was designed to accommodate

muddy boots, whilst the low beams and tiled fake roof to the bar complete the full rustic atmosphere. It is a bar with character, and one I enjoyed drinking and chatting in. The stable bar has a bare wooden floor, but has a far more contemporary feel to it. It leads into a large restaurant, and there is no doubt that this is the foodie area of the pub.

Unfortunately only two of the four available pumps were serving on our visit, Adnams' Bitter (3.7%) and Cliff Quay Brewery, Tolly Roger (4.2%). I tried the latter and found its light hop and citrus flavour quite refreshing.

The next pub on our tour the **Marquis of Granby, Stetchworth**, is one of a number of English pubs named after Lieutenant-General, John Manners, Marquess of Granby (1721-1770), the popular Commander in Chief of British Forces.



Walking into the large single room bar, we were welcomed by enthusiastic landlady and owner, Kate Strachan, who interspersed chatting with us between frequent visits to the kitchen where she was preparing some very tasty looking traditional British food.

Two regular beers Timothy Taylor Landlord (4.2%) and Woodforde Wherry (3.8%), sat along Greene Kings Gold Beach and Greene King (Hardy and Hanson's) Old Trip (4.3%).

Moving onwards we came across the village of **Dullingham**, and took the opportunity to pop into **The Boot**.



The Boot was almost closed in 2000, when Greene King claimed it was not a viable pub. Fortunately Dullingham villagers knew better. They bought the pub and turned it into a “vibrant community asset”.

14 years later, the Boot is still thriving, “supporting darts, crib and petanque teams, as well as offering live music, and a twice yearly beer festival.” (whatpub.com/pubs/CAM/29/boot-dullingham)

We were offered a warm welcome by bar person, Pauline, and could happily have spent longer sipping our choice of the four beers on offer, two from Woodforde, (Wherry (3.8%), and Sunbeam (4.2%).), Greene King IPA (3.6%) and Adnams Southwold Bitter (3.7%), which were all in very good condition, but by now it was early evening and we were really keen to get to our final pub, the Cambridge CAMRA Pub of the year 2014, **The Chestnut Tree, West Wrating**.



Another failing Greene King pub, The Chestnut Tree was bought by Landlady and Landlord Rachel and Peter Causton in 2012 and has been a roaring success ever since.



It was early evening and on our visit the public bar was full of customers, chatting eating and playing pool. The atmosphere was welcoming and we soon found ourselves at the pool table in friendly contest with the locals.

Local beers on offer included, Kitchener Ale (4.2%) from Buntingford Brewery, Crafty Brewery, Mild Mannered (3.5%).

In all it was a very satisfying, and in spite of the long list of pubs to visit, a very relaxing Tour. There are some real gems of pubs in the villages of the Eastern area of our district. They could use our support, so please don't wait for next years Ale Trails before trying them.



CAMBRIDGE CAMRA ALE TRAILS are run during the months of April and May every year. T-shirts for those who successfully completed the 2014 trails and submitted a claim will be delivered to the nominated pubs from the 24th July 2014.

The Alexandra Arms



Has it found it's niche? Neil McGovern thinks it may have.

The Alexandra Arms on Gwydir Street has had a troubled past. A Greene King tied pub, it sits between more popular neighbours, the Cambridge Blue, The Geldart and the Kingston Arms, and hasn't seemed to find a niche that will allow it to thrive. Most recently, it was taken over by Craig Bickley of the Free Press, who convinced Greene King to allow guest ales and re-define the pub as somewhere that was open for business again. Craig recently took the decision to return to the Free Press, which left the Alex (as it's affectionately known) back in the hands of the pubco.

Last month, the pub found a new tenant in the guise of Ed, from The Plough in Coton, as their Executive Chef, and re-opened its doors on the 22nd May, during the Cambridge Beer Festival. It has been refurbished, and its name rebranded to "The Alex". A number of the previous fixtures and fittings remain, with the old city map still adorning the main dining area, but the style is now best described as "metro tile and duck-egg blue, with pots of herbs on the table". It's a nice fresh look, but it's not the first thing that comes to mind when I think of a pub. The garden has also had a bit of a spruce up – just in time for summer.

I visited on a Thursday with a bunch of friends, after successfully making a table

booking via twitter (to @TheAlexCB1), and found a range of beers on offer. They have a custom branded beer, The Alex (3.9%) which is presumably a Greene King rebrand, as well as IPA Reserve (5.4%), Gold Beach (5%) and Ale Fresco (4.3%) from the pubco. However, these are accompanied by Wolf Brewery's Strawdog (4.5%) and Buntingford's Highwayman. I plumped for the Highwayman, being only 3.6%, and was served a very pleasant pint. Unfortunately, the oversized glasses that the previous tenant had touted were gone, but there was an unusual option of having a glass pint tankard.

The food is focused on burgers, with bread from Norfolk Street Bakery. There are a number of vegetarian options, as well as other more exotic mains, such as a dressed octopus salad or mussels.

However, we would not be the Campaign for Real Ale if we were just about food – there are restaurants for that. It was a little worrying to see only two guest ales on tap, but Ed reassured me that he has the opportunity to have four guests on at any time, and he's talking to a number of local breweries about their offerings.

His view is that the pub should serve good, local beer and food, and to keep it simple. With that in mind, I pointed out the CAMRA LocALE scheme, which Ed was very interested in. He's since supplemented the offering with Oakham Ale's Green Devil IPA.

Could it be that the menu, and a commitment to local beer and food is able to make the pub thrive where it has been unable to find its place before? Well, my doubts over the décor were put aside by the delicious food – that's one tasty burger! Washed down, of course, with a good quality pint.

Cambridge Summer Beer Festival



Cambridge CAMRA 41st Summer Beer Festival – another success!

Bert Kenward, Festival Organiser, offers his report:

The Monday of the 41st Cambridge Beer Festival was the busiest ever – no doubt in part due to the weather forecast of impending horror, predicted for later in the week. The bad weather kept being delayed, and never really appeared in earnest – as a result the festival was the second busiest ever, with around 38,500 people coming through the doors over the six days. Just shy of 100,000 pints of beer and cider were drunk. The forecast of doom meant we didn't order much additional beer during the week, and as a result we ran out about an hour before we were supposed to.

As last year, a panel of volunteer staff chose a beer of the festival in a blind tasting. This is the second year we've run such a competition, and once again **Moor Old Freddy Walker** emerged victorious. The public vote for beer of the festival was won by **Liverpool Organic Brewery**, with the excellent **Kitty Wilkinson**. Cider of the festival, also decided by the public, was **Black Dragon**, from **Gwynt y Ddraig**.

This year's charity was You Can Bike Too (www.youcanbiketoo.org/), a project based

at Milton Country Park that aims to provide bikes for all people to ride, whether disabled or not. Our visitors helped them to raise just over £10,000, and they also received numerous offers of help. It's a fantastic amount, and will put the project on a much sounder footing so they can continue to help people enjoy riding bikes that work for them.

The beer festival simply wouldn't be possible without the volunteers. Around 400 of you gave up your time to help before, during and after the festival. We're always looking for more volunteers all over the festival, but in particular we need people who can help build the festival in the week leading up and take it down the week after. An understanding of plumbing or electrics would be a bonus, but as long as you know they're best not mixed we can probably find something for you.

The branch's next beer festival will be the 8th Cambridge Oktoberfest. Once again it's at the University Social Club on Mill Lane, taking place on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 October. January 2015 will see the Winter Festival at the USC as well, and May 2015 will see us back on Jesus Green.

Meet the Landlord: Andy Pierce, The Mill



the small dingy bar and replaced it with a long timber panelled one. They opened out the seating area, giving the pub a lighter welcoming feel – and of course they committed the pub to the promotion of local real ales.

Pub manager, Andy Pierce, was appointed on the recommendation of fellow City pub manager, Lucas van Reytsun in August 2012, and was very keen to tell me how much he has enjoyed his tenure.

“I remember when I first visited The Mill”, he said. “I’d parked out at Newnham and first glimpsed the pub across the meadow as I walked beside the millpond. I fell in love at first sight.”

Andy, who was born in Macclesfield, studied Philosophy at Sheffield University – not he says the best education if you needed vocational direction - but what made him get into the pub trade?

“When I was a student I went to a lot of good pubs. I watched the bar staff, especially the managers, and I noticed how happy they made the customers. I envied them that ability, and I thought that was something I’d like to do. I went to work on a temporary basis in The Great Expectation, a Dickensian themed pub in Reading, and ended up staying 5 years. In 2007, I moved to London and managed The Camden Lock Tavern for small pub operator, 580 Ltd. The Camden Lock was a high energy, performance venue. There was lots of activity and we sold a lot of beer”.

Andy still lives in London, but doesn’t mind the daily commute.

“City give us a lot of freedom to choose which beers we want to put on, and in the general management of the pub”, he told me. “The company has a ‘customer first’ policy, but it is also good to its staff. Managers and assistant managers are

Paul Ainsworth CAMRA pubs officer, once described The Mill as being in “a honey-pot location”. It is certainly true that during the summer months it has always enjoyed a good passing trade from students and tourists who gather in their thousands to chat and drink on the green by the millpond. But up until 2012, when the pub was leased and renovated by The City Pub Company, winter was a dire season. The pub was poorly run, visited infrequently by a straggling of students and local people, and it would make a loss for almost 6 months of the year.

In 2012, the company brought a new ethos to the pub. Recognising the need to make the interior more attractive, they removed

included in the company share incentive scheme – so we feel very much that we are part of the company.”

But surely there must be something he doesn't like about the trade?

“I've had to make sacrifices to the social side of my life. It is very much more than a full time job and I regret not having more time to spend with family and friends.”

In the two years since he became manager, The Mill has won two major CAMRA awards; Most Improved Pub in 2013, and the coveted LocAle Pub of the Year 2014.

If there was a CAMRA award for customer service it's very likely it would be in with a shout – Andy's 'can do' philosophy is passed on to his staff and customers, be they tourist or local, are sure to get a good welcome.

Knowing this really makes him happy.

“I'm really proud of the pub and of my staff” he said.

And his favourite beer? The Cambridge Brewing Company, Natural Born Millers, which was created in honour of Andy and his staff, of course!



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A Night At The White Horse Inn



Two local Breweries, Moonshine Brewery Cambridge Limited and Black Bar Brewery provided the ale, which was brewed in a style similar to that available in the 1640s, the time when The White Horse was first established as a pub.

It was an educational evening with guided tours of the museum being given by local historian John Flood, and tours in search of the lost pubs in the Castle Hill area – 34 in all – given by CAMRA pub history (and dark beer) fanatic Steve Linley, and Pints and Pubs blogger, Adam Walker.

The evening was declared a roaring success, so much so that we ran out of beer far too soon, and CAMRA Chair, Will Smith, had to be dispatched to the nearby Pickerel Inn to purchase some more!

Photos courtesy of the Cambridge Museum.

On Thursday 15th May 2014, for one evening only, the Museum of Cambridge, formerly known as The Cambridge Folk Museum, returned to its original guise as The White Horse Inn. The evening, overseen by museum director Catherine Morris, and staffed by museum assistants and CAMRA volunteers, featured attractions such as The Cambridge Morris Men, folk musicians courtesy of the The Full English Project, and of course real ale.





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having a choice. A real choice, of course, not as in the case of some regional breweries, similar beers with different names, or reduced strength copies of original brands.



But not all regional brewers are bad guys – some are introducing innovations of their own – and as we have seen with brands such as Morland, Hardy and Hanson, Young's, they too suffer economic pressures that

could ultimately change their profile and even cause them to close down.

Elwood's of Wisbech is a case in point. When I asked sales manager, Marcus Beecher what was the one thing he would like me to promote about the brewery I was expecting him to mention one of their beers;



Could you please ask people not to forget we are here?

the new Craft Apple Wheat beer perhaps, which had been launched, and had sold so well, at the Cambridge 41st beer festival earlier in the month, or the aptly named Coolship Lambic Ale (6.7%), a sour beer brewed in the Lambic style which utilises 'coolships', open topped, swimming pool - like vessels, which allow wild yeast spores to enter and flavour, or sour the beer prior to fermentation?

But I was wrong on all counts.

"Could you please ask people not to forget we are here?" he asked.

Having tasted the excellent, not too sour, Coolship, and the new honey edged craft beer, Buzz Light Ale (4%), I'm pretty sure that Marcus has no need to worry.

But I'm more than happy to pass on the request.



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