



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

Issue 90  
June - July 2015

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# the Oxford Drinker



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Oxfordshire Pub of the Year announced, Headington Pub Crawl Part 2,  
all the latest news, views, and reviews

The free newsletter of the **Oxford** and **White Horse** Branches of CAMRA

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The **Oxford Drinker** is the newsletter of the Oxford and White Horse branches of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

5000 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs across the two branches' area, including Oxford, Abingdon, Witney, Faringdon, Eynsham, Kidlington, Bampton, Wheatley and Wantage and most of the villages in between.

Please note that we are currently re-designing our website and pdf downloads are currently unavailable; once the new site is launched, this facility will be available again.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of Oxford or White Horse Branches of CAMRA, or of CAMRA Limited.

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Chris Hearn welcomes the branch to his brewery, Loddon  
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# Welcome

...enjoy country pubs this summer, while you can

**SUMMER** is here and where better to spend a lazy sunny afternoon than in the garden of a fine country pub, sipping a pint of ale and maybe enjoying some entertainment. We are lucky in the Oxford branch of CAMRA to have minibus tours to country pubs organised and driven by our chairman, Tony Goulding, but although bus services are available to some places, we usually have to drive our own cars into the country.

But unless we're lucky enough to always have someone else to do the driving, sipping a pint in a country pub might soon be out of the question. The Police Federation is calling on England and Wales to follow the example of Scotland, and most of Europe, and reduce the drink driving limit from 80 milligrams to 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, which for most people means that one pint of average strength beer puts you over the limit. Apparently there's been a big increase in female drink drivers, with the federation describing the number caught as the tip of an iceberg.

I'm going to be controversial and say that while I abhor the consequences of drink driving

as much as anyone, lowering the limit is a step too far. There are many causes of bad driving, with use of mobile phones to call or even text at the wheel being probably the most prevalent and dangerous. A recent study by Loughborough University found that dehydration was as dangerous as drinking a small amount of alcohol, while I would add personally that driving after a heavy meal, fiddling with a sat-nav or CD, or arguing with other passengers make me more of a liability than having a pint of beer.

But it's probably only a matter of time before the lower level comes in, and that could be the death knell of many country pubs that are already struggling with consequent loss of jobs and social contact. Greene King has already reported a drop in sales in Scotland, where the limit was reduced in December. Would it not be better for the police to have a blitz on mobiles than penalise the person drinking one pint of beer?

Turning to happier matters, there's news in this issue of two pubs on Oxford estates that locals are hoping to save by designating them as Assets of

Community Value while they try to raise the money to keep developers at bay. There's also a review of what's believed to be the first micro-pub in Oxfordshire, an idea that might keep community drinking going in areas where a traditional pub can't be saved.

I have finished writing a new book called *Oxford Pubs* which will be published in August, and during my researches the *Oxford Mail* library kindly made available some old photographs dating back sixty years or more. Starting in this issue you will find a new regular feature called Down Memory Lane using old photographs, which I hope will amuse and intrigue readers both old and young. "The Bar Man", Kriss Sprules, returns with the second of his regular columns, while our longer established columnist Stuart Bull describes the challenges of running a country pub.

Enjoy the summer. I wish I could say I'd be happy to drive to a country pub to have an orange juice, but it's easier to get one from the fridge – unlike a pint of hand-pulled bitter.

**DAVE RICHARDSON**



**CAMPAIGN  
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## Keeping in touch with Oxford Branch:

Get all the latest news and events, and share information about what's happening in your area. Sign up to our e-mail list at: [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists)

To receive copies of the *Oxford Drinker* by post, please send A5 sized, self addressed envelopes with postage to cover 100g letter to: **Oxford Drinker, 25 Chamberlain Place, Kidlington OX5 1SG** and we will send you as many issues as you send envelopes.

# POTY training

**Dave Richardson** visits the four Oxfordshire nominations for Pub of the Year

**EVERY YEAR** each branch of CAMRA nominates its Pub of the Year (POTY) with some branches having more than one award. Members had to visit each pub in the county to take part in the Oxfordshire voting, and in a change to the rules this year, they could only vote for other branches' winners and not their own. Pubs are judged using criteria including beer quality, atmosphere, welcome, community focus, sympathy with CAMRA's aims and good value. The Oxfordshire winner now goes forward with other county winners (the Rising Sun in Berkhamsted and Queen's Head in Wokingham) to voting for the Central Southern champion, with the winner of that in with a chance of becoming national Pub of the Year.

## **South Oxfordshire: The Plum Pudding, Milton**

Congratulations to Jez and Mand Hill, owners of this free house, for winning the 2015 award less than 18 months of taking over the pub, then named the Admiral Benbow,

from Greene King. They have "form", however, having previously run the Cherry Tree at Steventon and Blue Boar at Aldbourne, Wiltshire – both Good Beer Guide entries on their watch, as is the Plum Pudding (named after a local breed of pig, not a dessert!) today.

Four real ales are served, plus Old Rosie real cider, the three regulars being Loose Cannon Abingdon Bridge, Brakspear Oxford Gold and Plum Pudding Best Bitter, brewed by Ringwood, which is very good value at £2.70 a pint. The guest ale today was the very hoppy Wentworth WPA (4%), my choice, which slipped down without touching the sides.

The Plum Pudding is a pleasant, L-shaped, stone flagged pub, with a very long garden that is partly grassed, with Aunt Sally pitch. Beer festivals are held here twice a year (next on 10-11 October), with village brewery Lovebeer setting up in an outhouse. It's clearly at the heart of village life and was busy this Saturday



lunchtime with drinkers and diners tucking into a menu with most main courses costing around £10. Of note are the dozens of bottled beers on shelves all around the walls, still unopened but past their sell-by dates, which are Jez's pride and joy. When live music is on they have to be taken down, due to the risk of vibration and breakage.

I scored the Plum Pudding highly in all categories, but the range of real ales was not the most interesting.

## **White Horse: The Royal Oak, Wantage**

The White Horse award usually goes to either this pub of the Shoulder of Mutton, also in Wantage, but the Royal Oak is now in the ascendency. This free house has won the award many times, and was CAMRA's National Cider POTY in 2011 and 2012. Landlord Paul Hexter and his wife Frankie notched up a very impressive 30 years at the pub in 2013, and as real ale drinkers might know, Paul has two beers named after him





**LEFT:** Paul Hexter behind the bar of the Royal Oak in Wantage

**ABOVE:** Our visit to the Royal Oak was blessed with fine weather!

**RIGHT:** Hanging baskets adorn the front of the Plum Pudding in Milton



produced by West Berkshire Brewery – Dr Hexter's Healer, and Dr Hexter's Wedding Ale.

I made a beeline for the Healer, despite being distracted by no fewer than 11 real ales which were greedily sampled by our party, and all declared good. Healer (5%) is a truly excellent, deep flavoured, amber best bitter, though I couldn't trace the "marmalade zestiness" claimed by the brewer. It was voted Champion Strong Beer of Britain in 2009, and no wonder – but how does it get its name?

I enquired about Paul's medical qualifications, and he told me: "I used to run the Fisherman's Cottage by the canal in Reading, and regulars used to call me 'the doctor' as they came in for their medicine after a hard day's work. After moving here we used to have guest beers on all the time, and when West Berkshire Brewery started, we were very impressed with their quality. I commissioned them to do a brew especially for me, and Healer was launched in 1996. I got married in 1997, and that's

when the Wedding Ale was first produced. Our own beers became so popular that we didn't bring on as many guest ales as we thought, but we still have 11."

I'll drink to that, but despite the wide range, stuck with the Healer as it was so good (I also recently sampled it at the Brewery Tap in Abingdon). All but two of the real ales available, including my Healer at 5% (£2.80), cost less than £3 a pint – what great value, compared to Oxford or Abingdon prices! The range included rarities such as St George, Leprechaun Stout from Naylor's, Flying Monk, West Berkshire's Maggs Mega Mild, and the more usual Prospect and Trinity from Shotover, and 6X from Wadworth. With a visit to Loddon Brewery in half an hour, I had to decline one of the strongest draught beers I've ever seen in a pub – Cumulo Chaos by Wild Weather, which despite being 10% cost only £3.80. Cake Walk, at 6.5%, came in at a mere £3.10. I will return by bus to sample these – and just hope I'm not taken

away by ambulance.

The model of a Watneys horse-drawn dray briefly reminded me of less happy times, as I looked around this traditional, two-roomed free house which doesn't serve food, but concentrates on beer and cider. I didn't sample the latter, but typically over 30 ciders and perries are available in boxes, from producers including Heck's, Ciderniks, Cotswold, Tutts Clump and Orchard Pig. The pub sign shows a warship, rather than the tree that King Charles II hid in after defeat by Cromwell, which inspired the name of many Royal Oak pubs.

Needless to say, I scored this pub very highly.

#### **North Oxfordshire: The Red Lion, Horley**

This was my first visit to the Red Lion or to Horley, a village down country lanes north of Banbury (the WhatPub? website mentions, helpfully, that Heyfordian bus service number 504 operates once a *week!*) It's an old, stone-built hostelry with



**LEFT:** The Red Lion at Horley

**ABOVE:** The Masons Arms in Headington Quarry

a small garden (Aunt Sally available), and again it is a free house not serving food but with darts, dominoes and live sports TV.

Immediately you walk in you can see it is a friendly locals' pub, several of whom were accompanied by their dogs. A former Hook Norton pub, it continues to sell Hooky as one of its regulars with the other being Sharp's Doom Bar, which you can find almost anywhere but does have a strong following. My eye was drawn to the third hand pump and I ordered a pint of Golden Citrus (4.2%), without realising, at first, that this is from the fairly new Turpin Brewery which started in Hook Norton, in the shadow of its well-known neighbour, in 2013. This was certainly the palest colour beer I have ever tasted, but didn't have the tang of others of that ilk. Purity's Ubu is also a regular although not available on this occasion, with my Golden Citrus being served in a Purity glass.

I enjoyed my ale well enough

while listening in to the locals' gossip, and I doubt whether, given its location, many visitors come here apart from CAMRA members attracted by its inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. I found it a nice enough pub, but it didn't have that Wow factor for me to score it highly.

#### **Oxford: Mason's Arms, Headington Quarry**

And so to our own four times winner of the City POTY award, and current holder of that title. If you don't already know it, the Mason's is well worth seeking out as it's a thoroughly traditional, non-food pub always with a range of excellent beers. It also has a micro-brewery, the Old Bog, in the back yard, although production has been very limited in recent months. This is currently the only brewery within the city limits although there are plenty in Oxfordshire. The Headington Beer Festival is held here annually (4-6 September this year).

The range available from the five hand pumps is ever changing, although you will often find a beer on from West Berkshire Brewery (Good Old Boy), Dark Star (Hophead), The Marlow Brewery (Rebellion) and Black Sheep. When available, Old Bog beers are usually on only at weekends.

Landlord Chris Meeson has a long history working at and running pubs around Oxford, taking over the Mason's with his brothers in 1997. It has been run by only four families since 1928, and he keeps the pub in very traditional style with thriving darts, Aunt Sally, crib and bar billiards teams, plus live sports. It does not open on weekday lunchtimes.

And the winner was.....

The Royal Oak in Wantage came out as Oxfordshire POTY, and that's how I voted. If I'd been able to vote for our own winner, the Mason's, would I have chosen that? I'm not telling!





# THE BEAR INN

The Bear Inn is the oldest pub in Oxford and is a hidden gem, just off the hustle and bustle of the busy High Street.

◆ ◆

The pub is popular with students, locals and tourists alike, who enjoy a warm welcome, a range of real ales and bottled conditioned beers and traditional, home-cooked food by the fire.

◆ ◆

The pub is most famous for its collection of ties - dating back to the early 1900's and representing clubs in the Oxford area and, more recently, around the globe.

◆ ◆

A great place to unwind, take off your own tie, and enjoy looking at everyone else's!



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# Pub News

## Culham

**WAGGON & HORSES:** The pub was closed and boarded up at the beginning of May, and was being advertised for sale on daltonsbusiness.com. The free house had been run by South African couple Hamish and Valerie Forsyth for over three years, and had five hand pumps. The advertisement set a leasehold price of £285,000 with annual turnover of £312,000. The pub's Facebook entry said it "will be refurbished and re-opened in the near future".

## Oxford

**AMPLEFORTH:** The only pub on the Risinghurst estate in Headington closed suddenly in May, but locals are discussing mounting getting it listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), giving them a six-month period to arrange a bid for the property. Punch Taverns put it up for sale for £625,000 and said there were no plans to re-open it in the near future. The "Amp" has fallen on difficult times in recent years with off-on closure, but new tenants who arrived in December 2014 were trying to make a go of it.

**BUTCHERS ARMS:** Landlord Paul Hitchcock has been given Fuller's Master Cellerman status. Oliver's Island (a new 3.8% golden ale from Fuller's) is now a permanent offering.

**HOLLYBUSH:** The new owner of this West Oxford pub, on Osney Island, has warned that it could be closed permanently after the city council rejected his plans to stay open until 3am at weekends. Plans to erect a large marquee to

act as a shisha smoking lounge were still with the council at the time of writing. It was acquired from Greene King in January.

**JACK RUSSELL:** This New Marston pub closed in December and locals are now hoping to get it listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) in an attempt to prevent it being demolished and replaced by housing. The pub was sold by Greene King to Hawthorn Leisure and locals had expected it to re-open, said local councillor Mick Haines, who added that no formal closure notice had been posted. Enough signatures had been collected to support an ACV listing. Sue Quartermain, the pub's former landlady, wrote to the *Oxford Mail* stating: "I would just like to say that if the devastated residents who are so distraught at the pub closing down had actually used the pub on a regular basis, it would still be open today."

**MARLBOROUGH HOUSE:** This South Oxford pub closed in 2008 but has re-opened as a café-bar, with extra guest rooms, for the Ethos hotel situated on the opposite corner. The Hall's brewery sign remains in place and it is selling Rebellion ales from Marlow from polypins kept in the fridge.

**PRINCE OF WALES:** Wadworth's Iffley Village pub has completed a £220,000 extension and refurbishment including another 80 seats in the lounge, a further 120 in the garden and new toilets. Licensees Steve and Sue Bant took over last year after the abrupt departure of the previous landlord, with a strong focus on food including two courses for £10 from Monday to Friday lunchtimes, and "retro" basket meals costing £7.50 (£6 if you

come dressed in 1970s gear!) Six real ales are served, mainly from the Wadworth range, but with up to two guests.

**PRIORY:** This ancient pub close to the Kassam Stadium may re-open if it can be linked to a new hotel being built next to it. Excavations for the hotel have revealed the remains of nearly 100 people buried here, believed to date back hundreds of years to when it was Littlemore Priory.

**THREE GOATS HEADS:** After refusing to serve real ale for many years, this city centre pub in St Michael's Street has introduced Old Brewery Bitter by its owner, Yorkshire brewery Sam Smiths. It operates only a few pubs in the South, the nearest being in Cheltenham and London.

**TREE HOTEL, IFFLEY:** Set in the heart of Iffley, The Tree Hotel will host their third beer festival on 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> July. The turnout last year topped 300 people in the opening night, enticing revellers to sample an impressive selection of beers, ciders and real ales and this year's beer festival is guaranteed to be even bigger and better. To top it off the Tree Hotel will also be showcasing their Indian and European cuisine with a mouth-watering BBQ.

Following two devastating earthquakes in Nepal in recent weeks, the Tree Hotel has been working hard getting involved with fundraising to help the people of Nepal. So far, they have managed to raise a total of £2165.88 but the quest to raise more funds continues with an Indian Buffet Curry Evening on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June. The evening will include a cooking demonstration by the hotel's



Managing Director, Kavita Pal, and will also include a raffle and auction with proceeds going to the Nepal Earthquake Appeal.



## Sandford

**CATHERINE WHEEL:** The free house has been taken over by Paul Carney and his son Josh, in a bid to revive its fortunes. "It is early days yet but we feel that the atmosphere and the beer have improved," said Paul. "We will be trialling different ideas and welcome input from the local community and anyone that wants to support local pubs." Sharp's Doom Bar and Fuller's London Pride were being served on a recent visit. The only other pub in the village is the Kings Arms down at Sandford lock.

## South Hinksey

**GENERAL ELLIOTT:** The pub, which acted as an excellent host for Oxford CAMRA's branch meeting in June, has announced the dates of its first beer festivals since re-opening last November – 10-12 July and 11-13 September. It promises 15 real ales and 10 ciders, a barbecue and entertainment, with festival hours from 11am-8pm.

# Beer Festival Diary

## Friday 19 - Saturday 20 June

### Rugfest - Wallingford's Summer Music Festival

Wallingford Sports Park,  
Hithercroft Road, Wallingford  
[www.rugfest.co.uk](http://www.rugfest.co.uk)

## Saturday 27 June

### Charlbury Beer Festival

Charlbury Cricket Club, Dyers Hill,  
Charlbury  
Incorporating 'The World Aunt  
Sally Open Singles  
Championship'  
60+ beers, ciders & perries  
[www.charlburybeerfestival.org](http://www.charlburybeerfestival.org)

## Friday 3 - Sunday 5 July

### Seven Stars Beer Festival

The Green, Marsh Baldon, nr  
Oxford  
01865 343337  
25-30 beers  
[www.sevenstarsonthegreen.co.uk](http://www.sevenstarsonthegreen.co.uk)

## Saturday 4 July

### Haddenham Summerfest

Haddenham Community Junior  
School, Woodlands, Haddenham  
Open 11am to 9pm  
[www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk](http://www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk)

## Friday 10 - Sunday 12 July

### General Elliott Beer Festival

Manor Road, South Hinksey,  
Oxford  
15 beers plus 10 ciders  
01865 608567  
[www.thegeneralelliott.co.uk](http://www.thegeneralelliott.co.uk)

## Friday 17 - Sunday 19 July

### Thamesfest Music & Beer Festival

Rock of Gibraltar, Enslow Bridge,  
Bletchington, nr Kidlington  
01869 331373  
[www.thamesfest.co.uk](http://www.thamesfest.co.uk)

## Saturday 18 July

### Hook Norton Festival of Fine Ales

Held in a field off Clay Bank, Hook  
Norton  
[www.hookybeerfest.co.uk](http://www.hookybeerfest.co.uk)

## Friday 24 - Sunday 26 July

### Maidenhead Beer & Cider Festival

Desborough College,  
Shoppengangers Road,  
Maidenhead (note new venue)  
100 beers plus ciders & perries  
[www.maidenheadbeerfest.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadbeerfest.org.uk)

## Friday 24 - Sunday 26 July

### Tree Hotel Beer & Cider Festival

Church Way, Iffley, Oxford  
15 beers & ciders  
01865 775974  
<http://iffley.treehotel.co.uk>

## Saturday 25 July

### Wads Stock Music and Beer Festival

Wootton & Dry Sandford  
Community Centre,  
Wootton, Abingdon OX13 6DA  
01235 532816

## Friday 31 July -

## Saturday 1 August

### Cogges Beer and Cider Festival

Cogges Farm, Cogges, nr Witney  
30+ beers & ciders  
01993 772602  
[www.cogges.org.uk](http://www.cogges.org.uk)

# Micro-pub for Carterton

**Steve Lympany**, editor of North Oxfordshire CAMRA's Beer on Tap magazine, visits what's believed to be the first micro-pub in the county

**IN CARTERTON**, down a short nondescript alleyway (beside an excellent bakers) is to be found Oxfordshire's first micro-pub. The Siege of Orleans opened on 8 May with little fanfare and fuss, but it is quite a big event in the Oxfordshire pub scene.

Micro-pubs have been in existence for about 10 years with the first, the Butchers Arms in Herne, Kent, opening for business in 2005. They now number over 100 and cover most of the UK. However Oxfordshire has seemingly resisted the trend, until now. The pub is named after a battle in the Hundred Years war in which the Earl of Shrewsbury was killed by one of Joan of Arc's battalions, on the 8 May 1429. In a tenuous link the Earl of Shrewsbury owned the land which is now Carterton, and he died without any heirs. The land was transferred to the king who sold it on, and after a few centuries it ended up being purchased by the Carter family and the rest, as they say, is history.

It has a lager font, Krusovice, a Czech craft lager and music, but it is in essence a micro-pub. The owners are Phil Lewis and Chris Jones, who also own the Cotswold Arms in Burford, and they had been planning a move into the town for about two

years having done their homework. A town the size of Carterton needed a real ale pub!

Four hand pumps are selling mainly local ales, one from Marston's ale which helped to sort out the cellar. The others feature ales from Booze Hound, Cats and Two Cocks, and other brewers are lined up including XT and perhaps some of the Hook Norton Craft range. One cider is also sold which was Mill White Rum Cask on my visit, as well as quirky spirits including a Moldovan Vodka (which is served in miniature fire extinguisher!) and a US vodka (served in a blue flashing glass). All very non-CAMRA, but strangely alluring!

It is open from 11am-11pm and has no plans to extend its hours, or be in competition with other pubs in Carterton. Live acoustic music is planned in the future as are some competitions and meet-the-brewer events. It also sells bottled beers from Two Cocks and a small, but well-chosen selection of foreign brews including Swedish and Dutch beers and, for the driver in your life, coffee. In line with the micro-pub philosophy there is no food served, just bar snacks.

This is not a standard micro-pub and could well be the victim of its own success. Perhaps what the town really could do with is a bigger version of the Siege of Orleans!



**TOP:** Phil Lewis behind the bar

**ABOVE:** The interior of the Siege of Orleans



# The Low-down on Loddon

**Dave Richardson** joins a branch visit to a brewery just outside Reading

**I HAD** enjoyed Loddon beers several times before, especially at the Seven Stars in Marsh Baldon where Ferryman's Gold and other beers from its range are a regular feature. So I was keen to see the beast in its lair, and although it's only a few miles from the town centre, you don't get the impression you're anywhere near a brewery in the farmland around the village of Dunsden Green.

Loddon arrived quite early in the small brewery revolution, being set up by Chris Hearn and his wife Vanessa in 2002 with the first beers produced the following year. Chris had brewing "form", however – as he worked for the original Brakspear brewery in Henley from 1976-1994 with his best-selling Hoppit being based on Brakspear Bitter's original recipe. He went on to work for Batemans and Morrells, then borrowed £1.4 million to set up Loddon, named after a local river, acquiring 500 barrels from Morrells after its closure.

"We opened in the year that the Brakspear brewery in Henley closed, and we knew there would be a backlash against this and that there would be business to pick up," said Chris. "This was also a good time as changes to beer duty made brewing viable."

He has been rewarded with great success, as his beers are now widely available through

Wetherspoon, Punch Taverns, Enterprise and independent pubs especially around Reading, Maidenhead and Wycombe. But he has pulled out of selling bottled beer through supermarkets, saying there's no money in it.

A range of beers was available for branch members to taste straight from the barrel, and all we had to do in return was put some money in the charity box to support local air ambulance services. The range included Reading Best (4%), Bamboozle (4.8%), Hullabaloo (4.2%) and Ferryman's Gold (4.4%), but I tried a mild/porter hybrid called Reading Dark (4%) and was soon hooked on its sweet, nutty flavour. Pity it's a monthly special!

Chris said it was a constant battle to reproduce successful

flavours, especially for Ferryman's Gold, because of the availability of suitable hops. But tastes are changing, with people just as likely to drink golden ales in the winter and darker ales in the summer.

We all enjoyed the experience, and hope to see Loddon's range more widely available in our branch area. But Chris described Oxford as "a bit of a desert" for Loddon except for Wetherspoon and the James Street Tavern, although other outlets include the Nag's Head in Abingdon, New Inn and Plough in Witney, and North Star in Stevenon.

The next open evening at Loddon is on 17 July, costing £22.50 including drinks, food and entertainment by the Kennet Morris Men. It's highly recommended.



# and it's farewell from them

**Dave Richardson** profiles two long-serving landlord couples in north Oxford



**THERE MUST** be something in the water, or more likely the beer, in North Oxford, that encourages landlords to put down roots. At the end of June we say goodbye to Barry and Lesley Greenhough, who are retiring after clocking up almost exactly 30 years at the Dew Drop Inn in Summertown. Despite this, they are not the longest serving landlords in Oxford – an accolade that belongs (as far as we know) to Andrew and Debbie Hall, just down the road at the Rose & Crown in North Parade, who have been there for 32 years. We'll be catching up with Andrew and Debbie in the next edition of the Oxford Drinker, but here's Barry and Lesley's story.

They actually arrived in Oxford at Christmas 1982, slightly before the Halls, as trainee managers working for brewer Courage which then owned the pub. They then moved on to the Red Cow at Lower Caversham, Reading, where they worked for more than two years before getting the call to come and manage the Dew Drop. They have lived "above the shop" ever since, bringing up two children.

The pub has come under a variety of owners since the

break-up of Courage, including Imperial Inns and Taverns, Hansons, Grand Metropolitan, Chef and Brewer, Scottish and Newcastle and Spirit Inns. Latterly it was owned by Orchid Inns, but was taken over last year by Mitchells and Butlers which plans a refurbishment shortly. The Greenhoughs have been managers throughout that time.

"In the early days we never had a choice of ales apart from Courage Best and Courage Directors, and at one point Courage was trying to get rid of real ale altogether as they could make more money out of the fizzy stuff," recalls Barry. "A lot of people didn't know how to keep real ales, but nowadays you can get trained and the choice is huge. I have pump clips from guest ales coming out of my ears."

At present the Dew Drop has three real ales on six pumps, but the range might well increase in future. London Pride and Brakspear Bitter are regulars, while Thwaites' Wainwright was available on a recent visit. "Customers haven't changed all that much over the years, and we always wanted to be a pub for everyone," says Lesley. "The

biggest change has been the technology – the computers, the tills and the wifi. And of course we now serve much more food, are open all day, and had to adjust after the smoking ban came in."

The Dew Drop, on Banbury Road, is a rare survivor as the only traditional pub left in Summertown, a busy up-market suburb with lots of café-bars and restaurants. The Kings Arms further up Banbury Road became the Dancing Dragon Chinese restaurant, while the Red Lion and Woodstock Arms in Woodstock Road also closed.

"People say we're lucky to be the only pub in Summertown, but it could easily have been us that closed and it's taken a lot of hard work," says Lesley. "We have so many happy memories, but running a pub is 24/7 and more of a lifestyle than a career."

They advise people wanting to come into the trade to train as managers rather than risk their own investment, and predict that the Dew Drop has a bright future. Their last day behind the bar will be on 27 June, before they spent time in Europe deciding what to do next. It should be some leaving party.

# ...while these two are still going strong



**NORTH OXFORD'S** third long-serving landlords are David and Jenny Rhymes of the Gardener's Arms in North Parade, directly opposite the Rose & Crown. They have now been here for 22 years having arrived in 1993, although they entered the licensed trade in 1987 at the White Hart, Wytham after David had run the Warlands cycle shop on Botley Road for over 20 years. They then moved to the White Hart at Minster Lovell, before settling at the Westgate in central Oxford, in 1989. The Westgate, now the Bell and Compass, was a flagship pub for Oxford brewery Morrells, which also owned their present pub (not to be confused with the Gardener's Arms in nearby Plantation Road, also ex-Morrells). The brewery closed in 1998, with many of its former pubs being taken over by Greene King in 2001.

The Gardener's Arms remains in GK hands today, but fortunately without much branding or its standard range of ales. As a tied tenancy, the pub has to source its ales from GK and one of these is badged for the Gardener's. The other ales on during my visit were from the GK guest range – Thwaites' Wainwright, and a very tasty TEA (Traditional

English Ale) from Hogs Back Brewery which was in itself worth making the visit. It's definitely tea with a difference, while the freshly squeezed orange juice was also unusual. The sandwiches too are well worth seeking out, and hot meals are also served despite the limitations of its kitchen.

"I enjoyed working for Morrells, which was a wonderful old family firm," says David. "I am tied to Greene King and must buy my drinks from them, but I can sell what I want from the guest range. I don't know whether legislation to end the beer tie will make any difference. We'll stay as we are for the moment."

David says his clientele has changed greatly since he arrived, when the pub was more Gown than Town due to its proximity to several colleges – it used to be known as St Hugh's Junior Common Room! But with colleges now having better bars of their own, it is more a Town pub though not necessarily attracting people from the immediate vicinity.

"People's drinking habits have changed and they don't drink in the same volume, with

youngsters drinking at home before coming out," he explains. "Some former students still come back to see us when they're in Oxford, but our regulars come from all over. A lot of local people just don't go to a pub. We hope to carry on for many more years, but the traditional pub could go by the wayside. Young people want glossy, highly polished places with loud music. It's only the older people who want to sit and talk."



**TOP LEFT:** Barry and Lesley Greenhough behind the bar at the Dew Drop

**TOP RIGHT:** David and Jenny Rhymes at the Gardener's Arms, North Parade

**ABOVE:** The Gardener's Arms



# Brewery News

## Hook Norton

On the second Thursday of every month it has started running an Open Tap Takeover where the latest beers from Hook Norton or its new micro-brewery range Crafty Ales are available to try. This is a free event with different cask or bottled beers each month, with bottled beers such as First Light, Red Rye, Mild and Cotswold Pale Ale, the latter being a new beer brewed for Marks and Spencer and in its stores now. At each table there are tasty meats, cheeses and breads selected to match to the beer profiles. Managing director and head brewer James Clarke gives tasting notes and explains the beers, brewing and family history – anything he can answer! This is a free event (next on 9 July) but the brewery appreciates being told in advance to manage the numbers.

Red Rye sales have exceeded expectations since its first brew for Craft Beer Rising in February, with a 330ml bottle run and a kegged product planned for the summer. "Project Crafty Ales has been underway since 2013 when we began experimenting with late hopping beers and small fermenters," says James. "We're delighted with the positive response we've received so far, and predict that craft beers will be a big favourite with our current customers, whilst appealing to a new type of customer too."

Hook Norton is also joining in the celebrations of the Battle of Waterloo 200th anniversary with Old Hooky or Waterloo 200. Old Hooky was the nickname of the Duke of Wellington due to his hooked nose, while James has brewed Waterloo 200 in the

Crafty Ales range.

Two of its bottled beers have won medals at the International Brewing Awards 2015. Hooky won a Gold Medal in its class in the and now goes forward to the International Bottled Ale Championship Trophy competition. Old Hooky won silver in its class. These awards have been running since 1886 with over 30 judges from 16 countries assessing nearly 1,000 beers over three days, and all judges are practising professional brewers.

## Vale Brewery

It won the prestigious LocAle Beer of the Festival award at the Reading Beer Festival for its popular American hopped pale ale, Gravitas. Vale Brewery's Alex Smith, who entered the winning beer into the festival, says: "Everyone at the brewery is chuffed to bits. With the quality of local beers we were up against in the competition, to have Gravitas crowned the best in the area is just brilliant."

Since first being brewed almost 10 years ago, Gravitas has become Vale Brewery's most decorated ale. In 2008 it came third in the CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain at the Great British Beer Festival, and then won joint Gold at the Oxford Beer Festival in 2010. The bottled Gravitas won Silver at the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) Regional Final in 2014.

"We never use any artificial additives, colourings or flavourings in our real ales – just the best, natural Maris Otter malted barley, hops from around

the world, fresh water and yeast to produce clean, pure beers," adds Alex.

Vale Brewery is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Its beers, including Gravitas and Red Kite, are now regularly available at the General Elliott in South Hinksey, Oxford.

## XT

Planning permission for a brewery extension in Long Crendon has been granted. XT is looking to double the size of the brewery in the summer, providing more space for brewing, storing the beers and also a new tasting room. It has been growing steadily since the first brew in November 2011 and space has been getting more and more tight.

A Magna Carta special is being launched – XT 1215 commemorates William Marshal of Long Crendon, known as the Greatest Knight and the leading figure behind this historic document produced 800 years ago. XT Craft Keg beers have been selling well – the XPA American IPA, TEN Stout and Bastard Bunny double IPA are available in keg form. The range of beers offered will be gradually increased over time.

The nano-batch of Baby Animal beers have been trialling some slightly unconventional brewing methods – the 'Baby Stout' was cold brewed for three months (compare that to the more usual one week for a standard beer). There are also several Sour beers in progress which should be ready for the summer. The next brewery open day is Saturday 11 July

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# Heading to Headington ....part 2



Dave Richardson concludes a tour of pubs in this eastern suburb of Oxford by visiting those along London Road and in Old Headington

## White Horse, London Road

There's little to attract real ale drinkers here, as it's a standard Greene King Hungry Horse dining pub with only two hand pumps providing IPA on a permanent basis, plus another variable ale from the GK range which in this occasion was a fairly quaffable London Glory (4%).

It's an enormous open plan pub, much extended over the years and possibly the largest in Oxford. It's very big on TV sports with constant piped music and a direct appeal to the family market with kids' games such as the "craneosaurus". Food is served all day from 11am to 10pm and includes Hungry Horse specials such as the infamous double donut burger. The large car park became so popular with non-pub goers that a charge is made.

## Britannia, London Road

Things looked up considerably as we moved on to this large Ember Inns property, part of the

Mitchells & Butlers empire. With eight hand pumps available the choice is the best in Headington, and I was rather taken with a "Wheel of Ale" display of forthcoming spring ales – see photograph. The choice at this Cask Marque accredited pub included Ubu Purity – my choice and as good as expected – Sharp's Doom Bar, Black Sheep Bitter, Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Reverend James, Fuller's London Pride and two from Brakspear, Bitter and Oxford Gold. The Brakspear beers are regulars while others vary, and there's a 20p per pint discount for CAMRA members plus a "try before you buy" offer.

Drinkers are kept well informed about coming beers, which included Sharp's Atlantic, Bass Premium Ale and a spring selection including traditional, blonde, pale, IPA beers and stout, each one listing the type of hops, strength, colour and tasting notes, plus food matches and location of brewery. Those coming in spring included Old Leg Over from Daleside Brewery in

Yorkshire, Five Little Fishes from Andwells in Hampshire, Blonde from Liberation Brewery in Jersey, Mary Jane from Ilkley Brewery also in Yorkshire, St Austell's Proper Job, Everards' Sunchaser, Purity's Mad Goose, Castle Rock's Harvest Pale and Cameron's Strongarm.

This is an impressive choice by any reckoning, although by now an equally wide choice of summer ales will be available. The Britannia is a pleasant, split-level pub with a strong food offer too, and if the quality of my Ubu Purity was anything to go by, a strong contender to be Headington's top pub.

## Royal Standard, London Road

Virtually next door to the Britannia and somewhat in its shadow as far as real ales are concerned, the Royal Standard is a managed Greene King house with a restricted beer policy which does it no favours among serious ale drinkers. GK's IPA, Abbot and Old Golden Hen are the regulars, plus a guest ale which was 6X



from Wadworth – my choice and as reliable as always. These beers can be found all over Oxford, but what it lacks in beer variety, the Royal Standard makes up in friendliness with TV sports, live music at weekends, and good value food. It's not one for real ale drinkers to linger long in, but seems to be making a good living.

### Black Boy, Old High Street

Before you decide against going because you object to the name for "politically incorrect" reasons, may I point out that according to a sign inlaid in stone, this refers to a horse rather than a human being. A former Greene King pub taken over by Everards a few years ago, it is now presented as a gastro-pub with the vast majority of customers taking meals rather than just drinks. That said, the choice of real ale was wider than I might have expected, as is increasingly the case in dining pubs.

Even the two Everards beers on tap were unpredictable – no sign of Tiger or Beacon, but Clock Tower Golden Ale (3.5%) and TightHead (3.9%), these being the monthly specials for January and February, the latter with a Rugby Six Nations theme. The Everards website lists four core beers plus 12 monthly specials, so the choice at the Black Boy might well have moved on now to Xingu Gold (June) and Sly Fox (July). But the real surprise of our visit was Burton Bridge Brewery's Bridge Bitter (4.2%), from an independent brewery still flying its flag in this famous brewing town.

This went down a treat, but despite our visit being in midweek, the pub was very busy and as non-diners, we felt we might soon over-stay our welcome in the small area by the bar. I will go back one day to sample the food, as partners Chris Bentham and Abigail Rose promise "nice food which is cheap" and used to work for celebrity chef Raymond Blanc. Even if I don't like the food, I'll enjoy washing it down.

### White Hart, St Andrew's Road

Only a couple of hundred yards from the Black Boy is Everards' other pub in Oxford, which is very much a pub rather than a restaurant despite its fine reputation for home-made pies. On tap here were Tiger and Sunchaser Blonde from the brewer's core beers, plus the aforementioned TightHead and three beers from the company's extensive guest range. These were Truman's Runner (4%), reviving the name of this famous old London brewery; The Beer Studio's Glacier Blonde (4.3%), produced by Hydes of Salford; and Castle Rock's Elsie Mo (4.7%). I had a third of each of the guests and enjoyed them all, especially the tangy Glacier Blonde.

This great choice of ales can be enjoyed in a pub dating from the 17th century which has a fascinating history – look out for my *Oxford Pubs* book to be published in August, to read about the infamous brothel keeper Joan of Headington! Now it's thoroughly respectable, and a great place to end the evening and forget about the bus home.



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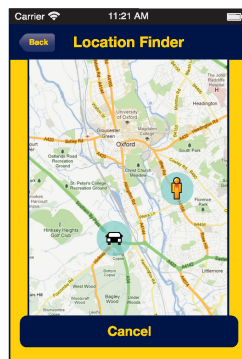
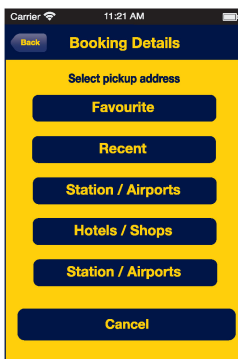
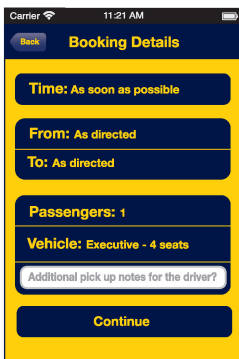


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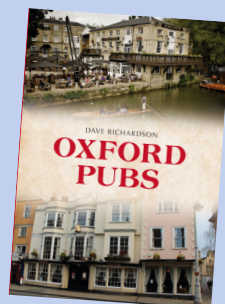
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# Down Memory Lane

In another innovation for the *Oxford Drinker*, we present the first of a series of old photographs reproduced with the kind permission of the *Oxford Mail*, which has substantial archives relating to pubs. I first saw the newspaper's library when researching my new book *Oxford Pubs*, to be published by Amberley in August, and what a wonderful source of information and photographs it is on all sorts of subjects. *Oxford Pubs* covers more than 40 pubs and takes a mainly historical approach, so the newspaper archive was very useful.

There will be more about *Oxford Pubs* in the next issue of the *Oxford Drinker*, but in the meantime here are two photographs that didn't make it into the book but are nevertheless very interesting. Enjoy.....



They say nostalgia ain't what it used to be. There are some things we miss about the pubs of yesteryear and some that we don't, and things we don't miss may include this actually rather splendid handlebar moustache sported by Peter Whittam, landlord of the Welsh Pony (now Eurobar) in George Street, seen here with his wife Suzanne in 1964. Peter was ex-RAF and had served in Palestine, and was celebrating brewer Morrells' decision to spend £5,000 on upgrading the

pub, named after the Welsh pit ponies once sold at Gloucester Green market. Nor do we miss Morrells' Varsity Keg, despite the rugby ball image on the bar, although the draught Bass, and Morrells Bitter and Dark Ale, look more interesting. Coincidentally, if you visit the Plough at Wolvercote today, you will see displayed in the bar a list of Morrells prices from that same year. A pint of Light or Dark cost 1s/3d (about 6p), Bitter 1s/6d (7½p), Varsity 1s/9d (8½p) and College Ale 3s (15p).



The Swan and Castle, but not as you know it. A plaque outside the Wetherspoon pub, which opened in 2009, records that it takes its name from an old pub that stood on the corner of Castle Street and New Road, until demolished and replaced by county council offices. Here's a picture of the pub in the 1950s when run by Hall's Brewery, which was just down the road. There was so little traffic in those days that you could park your car or motorbike outside, go in and have a skinful, and drive away quite legally.....

*Both pictures are courtesy of Oxford Mail/The Oxford Times (Newsquest Oxfordshire Ltd)*



# HOWZAT!

**Stuart Bull**, owner of the Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth, writes on the country pub's role as a community hub



**EDITOR** Dave Richardson asked that I might like to write something about the increasing strength of beer on the market. I had already made plans to talk about a different subject though, that of falling customer attendance of an evening and what we were doing about it. On closer inspection though, it occurred to me that as different as they sound, maybe the two things are actually related.

How can falling attendance in the evening be related to increasing strength of ale, you ask? Well, let's first talk about our first issue, one that has a direct impact on us as a country pub. We used to have a healthy trade until late evening, 11pm being closing time. But on some nights these days, the bulk of our trade is over by 9pm as people just don't come out late at night any more. Previously we had retired individuals and others who didn't have to rise especially early, so they could stay later. But those times have changed. Customers move on.

Now shutting at 9pm if we have no customers doesn't bother me so much, as it's nice to have an early night on some days of the week; however, I would like to

replace that lost trade with something else, especially on quieter nights, so myself and Angie put our heads together and considered a few things we could do to combat this situation. One idea of Angie's, with our chief star barperson Sarah, was to start a craft workshop. So that's what they did. They created Crafty Buttons ([crafty-buttons.co.uk](http://crafty-buttons.co.uk)), a workshop that invites people to attend and create button art. Whilst attending the workshop, our customers also have a drink or two and boost trade there. Other planned initiatives are a local business club, a finance group and a geek night. They're all about bringing people together to talk, learn, improve and have fun, and maybe relax with a glass of wine or a couple of ales.

So how does that relate to a perceived strength increase in ale? OK, so let me now talk about strength of ale at the Cricketer's. During the week (that is any time when we don't have a beer festival on and it's not Christmas), we never go over 4.5% ABV. Why? We can't sell it. Frequently, you'll find three ales on the bar, often at least two of them under 4%.

The reasons we can't sell it are varied, but one reason is because a lot of people drive to get to us, and even if you're not driving, a few pints of something at 4.2% is usually plenty, especially during the week. Even at a beer festival, when we do stock ales above our 4.5% threshold, they are rarely the best sellers. Many people have commented to me that we must surely be one of the strangest pubs in world, where all the stronger ales (even the ones that win all the awards) are the last to sell out. Weird, I know.

So onto these big, strong, mouthful beers. They cost more to brew. They cost more to buy. They have higher tax implications. But they do taste good. A beer of higher gravity has much more room for flavour than a lower alcohol beer. They are getting into Belgian beer territory – big, flavoursome beers – and that is why there is an increase in their popularity. They taste better than a lower ABV beer, simple. Maybe it's also to do with the declining premium lager market as well. As real ale increases in popularity, and as CAMRA becomes a more powerful

consumer voice, so people switch from 5% Euro lager to real ale and want something that fills the same space.

So let's re-cap. The Cricketer's has a declining trade later in the day. To combat this, we hold more community orientated events. The Cricketer's can't sell strong ale, but breweries are creating ales of rising strength. What's the link? Progress. Yes, progress. All we are seeing here is the migration of people from the country to the city, something that we are told is happening more and more. Our villages and rural communities are fading. Our cities are becoming swollen and burgeoning from the influx of people from the countryside. The jobs are in the cities.

This is nothing new, as it has

been going on since the start of the Industrial Revolution. But it will only continue in this direction, and as the owner of a country pub, I would predict that the vast majority of the strong ales sold by breweries are to pubs in towns and cities, not pubs in rural locations. We know what we need to survive: Be a hub for the community. Sell things to our customers that they want, and stick to a plan.

Other country pubs take a different approach, often going down the fine dining route. This is OK, but it's a tricky path, and very dependent upon fashion. Our plan was always to be traditional and build a reputation for quality ale and home-made food at reasonable prices, and stick to it. Being a hub for the wider community can only strengthen this bond.

## Oxford's Pub Poet

**Tom White** is just finishing an English Literature degree in Oxford and his poetry has been featured in the *Oxford Magazine*, and student journals including *Notes* and *NoHeterox*. He has written several poems about pubs that are displayed on their walls, and here's the one at the Kings Arms on Holywell Street. His poems also appear in the White Rabbit, Angel and Greyhound and Old Bookbinders, and soon in the Rickety Press.

### The Kings Arms

Give me a double chocolate stout, to chase  
The bloodied limbs of monarchy from sight.  
Give me a dozen scotch eggs, to embrace  
A new Republic built on beer's rich light,  
Its roof structured with sunbeams; bubbles bright  
Its furnishings; ruby its youthful hue.  
Restore the body politic aright!  
Assemble those blind body parts anew!  
—Yet I will sit a while, and drink with you,  
Before we race into some mad reversion.  
We to each other must at first be true  
Before we can be true to all dispersion.  
We'll spare the full-formed monarch our alarms,  
And limit them, for now, to the Kings Arms.

# Oxford Branch Diary

## Saturday 27 June Social at Charlbury Beer Festival

Opposite Charlbury Railway Station, open from 12 noon

## Saturday 4 July Social at Seven Stars Beer Festival

At the Seven Stars, Marsh Baldon, from 1pm

## Monday 6 July Branch Meeting

At the White Hart, St Andrews Road, Headington OX3 9DL  
Starts at 19.30  
Regular monthly meeting with pre-meeting social at the Britannia (18.30) and the Black Boy (19.00)

## Saturday 11 July Minibus Trip to survey Regional POTY winners

Limited spaces available. Call Tony to book a seat 07588 181313

## Saturday 25 July Social at Tree Hotel Beer Festival

At the Tree Hotel, Iffley Village, from 1pm

## Tuesday 4 August Branch Meeting

Treet Hotel, Iffley Village OX4 4EY  
Starts at 19.30  
Regular monthly meeting  
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# The Bar Man

**Kriss Sprules**, a barman at the Chequers in Oxford High Street, continues his new regular column by getting ready for the summer rush

**THE TOURIST** season is upon us. It wasn't long ago that this was a season of complete dread for the bar staff in this city, as we knew that only two things were for certain. They'd all be ordering fish and chips (which I always find strange, personally – I don't remember the last time I, or anyone I know, actually ate fish and chips, but they seem to think that's all anyone eats...) and they'd turn their noses up when offered a chance to try real ale. It seems that, for the longest time, our friends from the Continent (and even further afield) seemed to be hearing talk about the English drinking "warm beer" – to them, anything but icy cold was unacceptable. Even the rare few who would try it would ask for you to pile the glass with ice.

Thankfully, things seem to have changed over the last couple of years. They still want fish and chips, of course, but they've finally started to embrace our beer too. Real ale is fast becoming as famous a "must try" for tourists as battered cod, and that can only be a good thing for the trade in general. But not only do they want to try

it, a surprising number of foreign visitors seem to be so interested that I almost want to hand them out CAMRA membership forms. They want to know where it's from, how it's made, if they can buy it at home... it's quite unbelievable, really. It's gone from being dismissed with a turned up nose to being embraced completely by visitors.

In fact, their new-found enthusiasm for a good pint has re-invigorated my enthusiasm for their descent upon the city, too. Not only do they want to talk about our beer, but they want to tell us about the beer from their own countries. In the not-so-distant past, I've had conversations about real ale being brewed not only by our American cousins, and I'd have laughed if you'd told me they'd start brewing real ale a decade ago. There's an old joke about American beer being like sex in a canoe that they seem keen to kill off. But real ale also now comes from Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and even the Japanese are getting involved.

I talked in my last column about the astounding growth of ale in the time since I've been a barman, from the odd pint of best to the massive selection that we have now. And even having witnessed that, it still amazes me that there's a distinct possibility that we might be seeing beers on our pumps from not just all over the country, but all over the world. It seems that a century after the fall of the British Empire, we might just have found a new way to take over the globe....

Now, a column from me wouldn't be complete without a cheap plug for the Chequers. We've got a Meet The Brewer night coming up on 17 June with the lovely folk from Purity, and they'll be bringing along samples of Ubu, Mad Goose and maybe a few other goodies to boot. We've already got another similar event lined up for July, but swing by on 17 June (or any time, really) and I'll be happy to tell you all about that one, too!

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# Playing Hooky

**White Horse Branch visits the North  
Oxfordshire brewery**

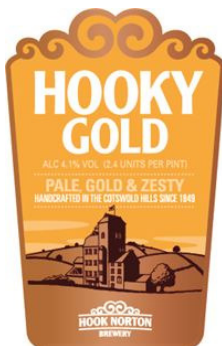
**HOOK NORTON** brewery kindly invited members of White Horse branch for a visit in May, to tour the brewery and especially to see the new pilot plant. This seemed a good excuse for a day out so was combined with a trip to Banbury Beer Festival.

The pilot brewing plant has been operational since the autumn, and the brewery has embraced the opportunity to try out new brews to complement its usual range. Before sampling we were taken on a most enjoyable and informative tour by our knowledgeable guide, Nick. Although most of the party of ten have been round innumerable breweries over the years (including a previous visit to Hook Norton), and probably thought there was not much to be gained from yet another brewery tour, we were all impressed with how Hook Norton has managed to retain or adapt the best elements of its historical tower brewery to changing times and tastes.

Of particular interest to the branch was the grist mill for crushing malt. Supplied in 1899 by Nalder and Nalder of Wantage, this is another example of original machinery which is still in use, and thought to be the last one of its kind. Seeing (and smelling) the boxes of Mosaic hops alongside Challenger, Goldings and

Fuggles in the hop store was an indication of how Hook Norton is keeping up with the times.

A recent trial brew was Hooky Gold, first developed in 2006 as a seasonal beer using Willamette hops, which it thought was the first Hooky beer to use American hops. However, in an old brewing ledger, it discovered that it was using US hops in 1908, as the UK supply was not sufficient for pale ale demand.



After the tour, which culminated in a visit to the pilot plant, Nick guided us through the selection of beers on offer in the tap room, including Playing Hooky, a 4.7% golden amber beer, made in collaboration with the Ballast Point Brewery of California using Columbus Hops. Thanks to Hook Norton and our guide Nick for a thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile visit.



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Narrows \*  
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White Horse

## **Oxford**

Four Candles \*  
Rose and Crown  
Royal Blenheim  
Swan and Castle \*  
William Morris, Cowley \*

## **Witney**

Company of Weavers \*  
Ye Olde Cross Keys \*

Pubs offer different discounts, and some discounts are available only at certain times or on certain beers. Please ask at the pub to find out what is offered. An asterisk (\*) indicates that the discount is in Wetherspoons vouchers that are sent to all CAMRA members - note that Ye Olde Cross Keys is not a Wetherspoon pub but does accept the vouchers.

If you know of a pub that offers a discount on beer to CAMRA members then please let us know at [pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk)



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# Festival reports

Branch Chairman **Tony Goulding** visits the Chester Arms whilst **Pete Flynn** saddles up to enjoy a choice of local ales at the Prince of Wales in Shippon

## Chester Arms, Oxford

The end of May bank holiday saw the first festival at the super, risen-from-the-ashes Chester, in Chester Street off Iffley Road. With five permanent beers on the bar and interesting food, this is a "must visit" any time. In the sun trap garden on the Friday evening were 12 local beers and three ciders all in good condition, along with snacks served from the shed in the garden.

The local community really supports this pub, re-opened towards the end of 2014, and at the beer festival you would have seen a few CAMRA members along with visitors who had walked from town to attend this very well-run event. There was the usual range of beers from Abingdon's Loose Cannon on the bar, with festival beers from Vale, Two Cocks, West Berkshire, White Horse, Rebellion, Loddon, XT, Hook Norton, Cats (a micro-brewery in Shenington, north Oxfordshire) and Siren. These are local beers for local folks, served by locals, so get down to the Chester.

**TONY GOULDING**

## Prince of Wales, Shippon

I enjoy getting out and about the country lanes of Oxfordshire on my bike and, to use the title of an Ian Dury song, I had more than usual "Reasons to be Cheerful" as I set off on a sunny Saturday afternoon to the Prince of Wales' festival over the weekend of 17-19 April in Shippon, a small village to the west of Abingdon near Dalton Barracks.

After tethering my cycle to the car park sign, having been almost blown here by a blustery tailwind, I was keen to sample a few of the real ales available, a majority of which were locally brewed, and dispensed directly from the cask. The landlady, Cheryl, greeted me cheerfully and, explained that, in addition to the 12 real ales, six ciders were available. Her husband, Kevin, appeared a little later and told me that they assumed the freehold of this independent pub in July 2014. It is always welcome news when a pub retains its free-of-tie status after management changes, so that a greater choice of beers remains available.

I sampled a good selection of local beers which included Adkin's, Alfred's Honey Mild and Wychwood's Hobgoblin Gold. My particular favourite

was West Berkshire Brewery's Maggs Magnificent Mild, a traditional style, deliciously dark mild full of roast malt flavours coupled with a smooth mouth feel and gentle sweetness. The chef had prepared a competitively priced menu for the festival to include such tasty offerings as freshly beer-battered fish and chips, and home-made beef burgers.

Permanent real ales available at the PoW include Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge, Shotover Prospect and Timothy Taylor's Landlord. Other regular beers include the ubiquitous Doom Bar, and Black Sheep Brewery's Black Sheep Ale.

Kevin told me that in his previous life he was an HGV driver whilst Cheryl worked in accounts, so running a pub was an exciting new venture for them. Kevin was a regular at the pub during the 1980s when it was part of the Morland empire. The pub would appeal to locals as it hosts regular darts teams, and as I unlocked my bike to face the headwinds for the journey home, I hoped that Cheryl and Kevin would be enjoying more than their fair share of tailwinds as they look forward to the end of their first year of trading and beyond.

**PETE FLYNN**



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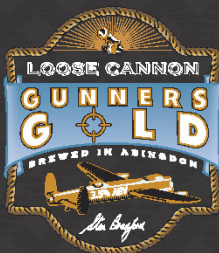
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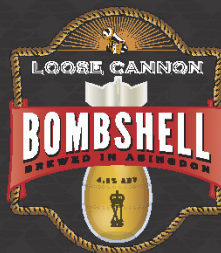
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