



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Issue 91
August - September 2015

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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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The Gardener's Arms is on Tony's route this month—see page 30

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Welcome

...it's your vote, so use it!

I'VE BEEN doing a lot of voting this year, and not just in the General Election. At branch meetings we have been choosing our entries for the 2016 Good Beer Guide, with the winners being revealed when the guide is published in September, and this summer we are also voting for the branch's Town and Country Pub of the Year with the City Pub of the Year being chosen later on.

Getting into the GBG, and retaining your place once you are in it, is vital to the success of real ale pubs – read the *Howzat!* column by Cricketers Arms landlord Stuart Bull on page 24 for his views on just how important it is. But CAMRA headquarters imposes a strict limit on the number of entries for each branch, and while the Oxford branch hopes to get this increased in future, the reality is that we can nominate only nine pubs in Oxford, and eight in Abingdon and Witney and country areas.

This means that many excellent real ale pubs can't be included, so how do we choose? Our starting point is the beer scores that any CAMRA member can input on the WhatPub website, so if you care about a particular

pub – whether you're a CAMRA member or a landlord – then spread the word about voting. We take the highest scoring pubs and then, through democratic discussion (which can get heated!) at branch meetings, whittle them down to nine plus eight. Any high scoring pub is considered, but not pubs which have had a change of ownership or management in the last year.

We also choose a City and Town and Country Pub of the Year (POTY), the current holders of the title being the Mason's Arms in Oxford and the Nag's Head in Abingdon.



Minibus trips are being organised on 15 August and 12 September to survey the Town and Country contenders – see Branch Diary for more details, and do please get involved. We are planning to change how we vote for City Pub of the Year this time around, due to some pubs rallying their supporters to vote for their pub and vote down the other contenders. More details in due course.

All this might sound like a lot of palaver, but the benefits of being in the GBG are very real and winners of the POTY can go forward to the county and regional heats with the chance of becoming CAMRA's national champion. It all starts with beer scoring on WhatPub, so do please get scoring.

In this issue you can read about the Regional POTY contenders, a new book I have written called *Oxford Pubs*, all the usual pub and brewery news, plus reports from further afield and our regular columnists. If you have ideas about what should go into this magazine, please contact me at editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk

DAVE RICHARDSON



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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

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.

Some tough competition

Dave Richardson joins a branch trip to the two pubs vying with the Royal Oak in Wantage to be named Central Southern area Pub of the Year

WE LOOKED at the four contenders for Oxfordshire Pub of the Year (POTY) in the last edition (Issue 90, June/July 2015), when the Royal Oak in Wantage (White Horse branch winner) gathered the most votes in a field also including the Mason's Arms in Headington Quarry (Oxford winner); the Plum Pudding in Milton, near Didcot (South Oxfordshire winner); and the Red Lion in Horley, near Banbury (North Oxfordshire champion).

The Royal Oak is now up against two other pubs in the Central Southern area, and whoever is declared winner goes forward to the national finals with a chance of becoming CAMRA's overall champion. We praised the Royal Oak for its wide range of real ales (11 were available during that visit) and real ciders, its welcoming attitude and keen prices. But what about the others?

Queen's Head, Wokingham

It took an hour to drive here from Wantage, and our spirits flagged when we saw the Greene King sign outside this rather attractive looking pub on the edge of the Berkshire commuter town. With many

CAMRA members around Oxford not supporting Greene King pubs unless they offer a better-than-average range of guest beers, how did the Queen's Head become a local champion?

The answer is that it's a GK "Local Hero" pub, able to serve a wider range of ales and position itself as a supporter of local breweries and, if appropriate, local food suppliers. The Queen's Head doesn't serve food but has six hand pumps, only three of whose beers are supplied by GK. These were West Berkshire Brewery's Maggs Magnificent Mild from near Newbury, Hoppit from Loddon Brewery near Reading, and Ascot Ales' Alligator (4.6%), Hoppit being a regular. I always enjoy a full flavoured mild and the Maggs didn't disappoint, and the Alligator also had a snap about it though it might have been better sampled first. Most of our party went for these rather than the in-house range, which consisted of Abbot, St Edmund's Golden Beer and Queen's Head Bitter, the own-badged landlord ale produced by GK which is in fact Hardy and Hanson's bitter. Our beers were nicely cool on this hot day, but landlady Carol Williams

prevailed on us to sample a GK keg ale, East Coast, using American hops from that side of the continent. I have to admit it was flavoursome.

"I'm delighted to have won the Berkshire award after being runner-up last year," she said. "The Local Hero arrangement is working well for me, and we like to vary our range of ales with mild usually featured only during CAMRA's Mild Month but now a regular offer. Because we are a small pub we can get by without selling food, and a lot of our regulars are delighted about that."

The pub is indeed small with only one room, although it also has an attractive garden where Aunt Sally is played – a game often thought exclusive to Oxfordshire. The building dates from the 15th century and was originally a barn, and is claimed to be one of only seven "timber crock" buildings extant in Berkshire. It has been a pub since at least 1740 and was briefly renamed the Welcome Home in 1870, at a time when Queen Victoria was thought to be unpopular.

We moved on with some reluctance, wishing Carol well. If only all GK pubs were like this...

RIGHT: The Queen's Head
Head

FAR RIGHT: The
canalside outside
the Rising Sun



Rising Sun, Berkhamsted

It was a good hour's journey around the M4, M25 and A41 to reach this Hertfordshire outpost, which is in fact in CAMRA's Mid-Chilterns branch area and so in the Central Southern region competing alongside the champion pubs of Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The "Riser", as it's known, stands directly on the bank of the Grand Union canal and we doubted whether we would get served at all as we arrived, as it was a beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon and a morris dancing troupe was in full swing. But there were plenty of bar staff on duty to take on all comers, which was a good sign.

This is a free house with nearby Tring Brewery supplying its own-branded Riser Bitter (3.7%), with a second beer from Tring on today in the form of Fanny Ebbs Summer Ale. I started with something from further afield, however – a tangy red ale called, unpronounceably, Cwtch from Welsh brewery Tiny Rebel, near Newport (4.6%), which was an excellent thirst quencher. How on earth do you keep up with all these new names? It was then time to try one of the two porters available, so I opted for Grantham Porter from Oldershaw Beers as it is

less strong (4.5%) than the more challenging Black Buzz (5.8%) from another local brewer, Leighton Buzzard Brewing Company. The Grantham Porter was one to savour while I got chatting to Nigel and Mark Granger, the gay couple who have run the pub for eight years.

"This was a well-loved back street boozer when we took it over, tied to a small pub owning company. When that went into administration, we took it over as a free house in 2011," explained Mark. "It was built in 1860 and wasn't one of the original canal pubs, but a beer house belonging to a chimney sweep. It wasn't going anywhere when we took it over but it's now a community pub, and just happens to be run by a gay couple rather than being a gay pub. We like to think that our being gay is irrelevant."

It has also been voted one of the top cider pubs nationwide, with 18 ciders and six perries available on the day of our visit from suppliers all over the country, kept cool in the cellar. Two ciders are available on hand pump in addition to the five pumps with real ale.

Mark reckons that he sells

beers from around 200 breweries nationwide over the course of a year, which makes this pub well worth seeking out. It has a true community feel and has "adopted" the lock outside, with a bohemian mix of customers ranging from City executives to farmers and people taking a canal holiday. Lots of board games are provided in the three-room pub, but the only food is snacks including a renowned Ploughman's Lunch, a monthly Cheese Club, and occasional "pop-up" dining on themes such as fish or vegan.

As we rejoined our minibus we noticed a Fuller's pub, the Boat, a couple of hundred yards further along the towpath. Time was when many CAMRA members would have made straight for that, but the Rising Sun is the kind of pub that sets itself any kind of corporate identity, and is all the better for it.

The verdict?

These pubs provide fierce competition to the Royal Oak in Wantage, to go forward as the regional champion. By a whisker, I scored the Rising Sun top – but which is the winner, we'll have to wait and see.



The Bar Man

Kriss Sprules, a barman at the Chequers in Oxford High Street, continues his regular column by pleading for a crackdown on anti-social behaviour

ONE OF THE great perks of my job is getting to meet people. Sometimes it's random everyday folks, sometimes it's celebrities – actually, in Oxford, it's probably a disproportionately high number of celebrities – and, usually, every encounter with people is a pleasure. Especially the ones who can hold an intelligent conversation and discuss a decent pint of ale over a decent pint of ale.

I wrote in the last issue about the joy of tourist season, but my expectations of the season thus far have been somewhat let down by the unfortunately large proliferation of home-grown idiots that seem to have come out this summer. Usually, the departure of the students is somewhat of a relief. Despite the millions of tourists performing the role of human roadblock on Cornmarket, Queen Street and, well, everywhere else, there was always a sense that the townies got to take the city back in the summer.

This year, however, I've noticed that all of the locals that I've seen dare to make their annual

venture into the city centre pubs come in two stripes: the loud, obnoxious moron or the lager-drinking, shot-inhaling moron. Or the cross-breed of these two things. Maybe this is just the old age talking, but what happened to the days when people went out for a civilised pint at night with some mates? When did it become fun to grab 30 pints with 20 mates, drunkenly stagger around yelling abuse at each other and start singing racist football songs?

Maybe I missed something whilst I was trapped behind bars for so long, but a trip to the pub was always supposed to be social, not anti-social.

So... why am I talking about this? Because I want your help. I want to bring back the old-fashioned traditional pub atmosphere. A place where civilised people can meet, talk, not turn into louts and where idiots are ostracised, not expected. The reason that these guys exist to ruin the city's pubs is because people – drinkers, staff and landlords and ladies – somewhere in this city are tolerating them.

I know I sound old when I say this, but we need – as a community – to start taking a stand against this. If you're in the trade, stop serving the idiots. You know who they are before you serve them. If you see people behaving in a manner that would shame a Millwall fan, do something about it.

As much as theories vary on why the pub trade has been in decline – the smoking ban, taxes, potential alien invasion, etc – I want to offer this one: the pub has become a largely unpleasant place to spend time these days. Especially at weekends. I'm on a mission to civilise. Will you join me?

Talking of joining me, we've got our next Meet the Brewer night at The Chequers at 7.30pm on 20th August with the lovely folks from Black Sheep Brewery. We're going to be talking beer, trying some free samples and just generally enjoying the company of real ale enthusiasts. It's completely free, too, so the more the merrier. Cheers!

And louts are not invited!

Monday 21st - September 2015



THE BEAR INN

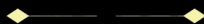
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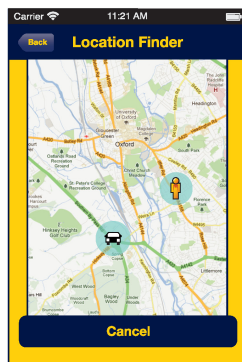
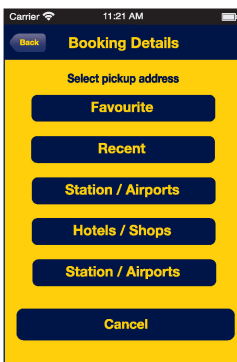
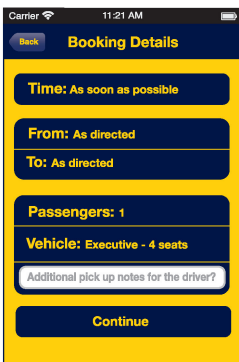


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Down Memory Lane



CONTINUING our new series using archive photographs reproduced with the kind permission of the *Oxford Mail/Oxford Times*, here are some familiar faces you might recognise – but as they were over 30 years ago! Andrew and Debbie Hall, of the Rose & Crown in North Parade Avenue, are Oxford's longest serving landlords, and here they are in 1983, when they arrived, and today, with their son Adam who now helps run the pub.

The old image appears in *Oxford Pubs*, the new book by Amberley Publishing that is launched in August and written by *Oxford Drinker* editor Dave Richardson (see page 12). Research turned up some interesting facts about the pub, some of which Andrew and Debbie knew about, and some which they didn't. They have researched the pub's history thoroughly in a poster on the wall, tracing its development from 1863 with the pub staying

in the hands of just two families, the Stokes and the Woodwards, from 1863 right through until 1976. With the Halls having notched up 32 years already, long may that dynasty continue.

What they didn't know was that in 1954, the Rose & Crown was nearly closed by the licensing

authorities because of its bad condition, according to a press cutting turned up in the *Oxford Mail/Oxford Times* library. As recounted in the book, only a spirited campaign by locals kept it open, who praised the pub's "cultured, flippant and witty" conversation.

With three real ales always available (Adnams and Shotover are the regulars) and a discount for CAMRA members, this free house is one of Oxford's favourite pubs with a beautifully restored Victorian interior and total absence of music, electronic games or other distractions. What can't be so easily conveyed is its wonderful atmosphere, with Andrew often to be found engaged in cultured, flippant and witty exchanges with friends old and new in the bar or the patio. I just wish it was my local!

DAVE RICHARDSON



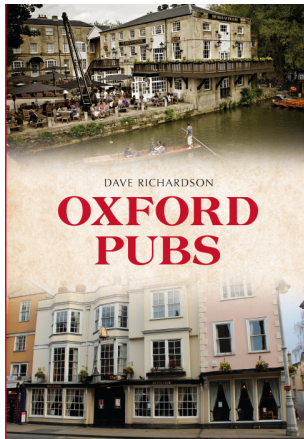
All you need to know about.... Oxford Pub History

Oxford Drinker editor **Dave Richardson** is the author of a new book, *Oxford Pubs*, launched by Amberley Publishing in August. Here he describes how he researched it.

I HAVE WRITTEN books before but unlike some of the authors in Amberley's *Pubs* series, I'm not a local historian. But it really was a no-brainer when Amberley approached me to write the volume about Oxford, as I knew most of the pubs already and the history of some is well documented.

The late Derek Honey wrote *An Encyclopaedia of Oxford Pubs, Inns and Taverns*, published by Oakwood Press in 1998, which draws some of its material from *Oxford Pubs Past & Present*, published independently by another local author, Paul Marriott, in 1978. So there was no need to trawl back through centuries of archives as these pioneers did, and I highly recommend both books if you want to read about pubs through hundreds of years – you might find them on Amazon.

But my book was always going to be different as it would include many photographs, both past and present, and I decided from the outset that I wanted to give a flavour of what these pubs are like today, to act as a guide book as well as a historical record. For that reason, unlike some books in the Amberley *Pubs* series, I have included only a few which



are no longer with us – the Golden Cross, now Pizza Express; the Roebuck, now Wagamama; and the Swindlestock Tavern, which closed over three centuries ago. I also tell the stories of the Angel and the Greyhound coaching inns, both on High Street, whose names live on at the Angel and Greyhound pub in St Clement's.

My first challenge was which pubs to include, as Amberley's limit was 40-50 when there are now about 90 pubs within the Oxford Ring Road. This is not a CAMRA publication so the availability of real ale wasn't an issue, but nearly all pubs featured now sell it. I decided to

concentrate only on traditional pubs whatever their atmosphere might be like today, and most of those in the city centre are included. I didn't include any modern pubs, or either of the Wetherspoons although they respect the history of their areas. I also have chapters on Jericho and North Oxford; Around the Plain (both of these areas make good walking tours); and Around Oxford, including the main riverside pubs and a few others of notable interest.

Research was long and arduous – as my wife Victoria continually reminded me – but someone had to do it! I ventured into pubs I had never been in before despite living in Oxford for 35 years, including the two gay pubs the Jolly Farmers and Castle Tavern/Baby Love, where the dancing pole in the basement was a revelation. I might be the only CAMRA member to try out the Cricketers Arms on Iffley Road since it became the Mad Hatter cocktail bar, but despite the absence of real ale I admire greatly what they are doing here.

The reception I received varied from keen interest and a willingness to help, to total indifference. It can't but help a



ABOVE: Oxford's version of the Sistine Chapel - but where is it?

RIGHT: Jacqueline Paphitis at the White Horse



pub to be in a quality publication such as this, but some landlords couldn't see the point and one large pub-restaurant in the city centre was very snuffy about it. The most helpful landlords/landladies included Andrew and Debbie Hall at the Rose & Crown (read more about them on page 11), Jacqueline Paphitis at the White Horse, Ez Parkin at St Aldate's Tavern, Richard and Kathryn Gibson at the Angel and Greyhound, and Helen and Cass Hazlewood at the General Elliott.

I took most of the external photographs myself, while a professional photographer friend, Phil Gammon, took most of the internal shots. The pubs chosen for their interesting interiors include the Bear, Chequers, King's Arms, Turf Tavern, White Horse, Old Bookbinders, Rose & Crown, Victoria, and Angel and Greyhound. For archive photographs I went to the *Oxford Mail/Oxford Times* archives where the librarian, Chris McDowell, was particularly helpful, providing many photographs from the 1950s onwards.

Not only does the library have lots of photographs, but lots of press clippings from the pre-digital age stuffed into brown

envelopes. Here I turned up several long articles by a well-known journalist and broadcaster called Stuart Mais (1885-1975) who wrote extensively about pubs and commented favourably on some pubs' mix of customers. He interviewed landlords at length and gives you a fascinating glimpse into pub life in the 1950s. The library is a true treasure, open to the public by appointment and a great resource for Oxfordshire.

I'm pleased with the many stories I unearthed about Oxford's pubs, so I hope you enjoy reading the book. For example, where's the Oxford pub with a witch's broomstick plastered up behind a wall? Where did Shakespeare used to stay, possibly fathering an illegitimate child with the landlady? Which pub has a ceiling painted to resemble the Sistine Chapel in Rome? And which pub was a sixteenth century brothel? You'll have to read the book to find out.....

Oxford Pubs will be available by the end of August, and many pubs will be selling it. To buy a signed copy direct from the author, visit oxfordpubhistory.co.uk or email daverichardson28@yahoo.com



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Messing about by the River

Two pub crawls end up at the Isis Farmhouse - firstly **Dick Bosley** completes his Cotswold Way walk, and then **Steve Lawrence** explores the Thames-side pubs between Abingdon and Oxford

IT MAY COME as a surprise to learn that our long walks don't just happen: many, many minutes of planning are involved to choose dates, times and, most importantly, finding a B&B within staggering distance of a pub. To plan our final assault on the Cotswold Way we met at the Head of the River beside the Thames in Oxford. Converted from a warehouse in 1977, this large pub is now operated by Fuller's and we blokes all had the 3.6% Seafarers while Jane checked out the coffee. Good marks all round.

Our plans complete, we walked alongside the river to the Isis Farmhouse, one of only two pubs on the Thames that cannot be accessed by car. A friend who used to work for Morrell's remembers lowering casks on a rope from Donnington Bridge onto an electric punt that was then used to deliver beer to the pub. You could use the term "shabby chic" to describe the interior here – but really the second word is superfluous. The pub has real character and was warm and welcoming; if you ever fancy a short walk from the city centre this is an excellent

destination. Isis (from Compass brewery) and Brightwell Gold were both tried and approved, although both could have been a little livelier. We also lunched here with home-made soups and stews served with probably the best bread I have ever eaten.

I got the impression that most of the customers here were, very sensibly, settling in for the afternoon but we forced ourselves to move on, crossing the river into Iffley and the Prince of Wales. We were walking on the Saturday afternoon after Christmas which may be why the Magdalen Arms and the Chester Arms along and just off Iffley Road were both closed, and so I had to lead our merry bunch to the Fir Tree. I could hear their mutterings on seeing the Greene King sign but the incipient mutiny was quelled by the sight of five real ales and a cider. Tribute and Black Sheep may be from opposite ends of the country but both were very good, and helped to reinforce the impression that this was a very fine pub indeed.

A final stretch along the Iffley Road allowed us to look at the

cricket bat-shaped chimney at the Cricketer's Arms, now a cocktail bar called the Mad Hatter. We then re-crossed the river to what I think of as the finest bus shelter in the world – St Aldate's Tavern. We tried but declined the Critical Mass from Dark Star as at 7.4% it would have finished off more than the afternoon. However, between us we did try Chinnock (Scarborough), Funnel Blower (Box Steam) and Greedy Goose (Hook Norton) before getting our bus home. All in all, a fine pub crawl that I strongly recommend you try.

DICK BOSLEY

ABINGDON and Oxford both sit on the river so all their pubs could be said to be near the Thames, but ignoring those, what about the bit in between?

If you go up-river from Abingdon the next place you come to is Radley. From the Thames Path there is a footpath across a field, and a pleasant walk through Lower Radley and over the railway bridge will bring you to the Bowyer Arms. The Bowyer family owned the manor of Radley from 1780 to 1901



and the pub was built in the middle of the 19th century and let, then sold, to Morland. This thriving pub has been run since last September by Andy Walton, and has a large dining area and garden. The only regular beer is Greene King IPA with two other Greene King guests, and one from Oxfordshire Ales under Greene King's Local Hero arrangement.

Next up the river is Sandford Lock with the King's Arms next to it with its large garden, where you can watch the boats go by and the geese and ducks getting cross with each other. This is a Chef & Brewer outlet with two regular stalwarts such as Doom Bar or Tribute, and a more interesting guest ale. If you cross the pub car park and go up the road to Sandford itself, to your right on the main road is the Catherine Wheel, a free house which has had its ups and downs recently. It's now run by Paul and his son Josh Carney, two locals who didn't like to see the only pub in the village itself closed. It often has Doom Bar and London Pride on and Josh, who was previously serving cocktails at Bar Aroma in Cowley Road, is weaning himself off lager and

examining the beer list with a view to getting a third beer he fancies as well.

A walk of 20-25 minutes from Sandford brings you to Iffley Lock, and a short stroll to Iffley village will bring you to the Prince of Wales. This Wadworth pub was taken on by Steve and Sue Bant last year and has recently had a major make-over and extension. The interior has been opened out, more of the garden brought into use, and the toilets much improved. This welcoming pub has up to six mainly Wadworth beers on, and possibly two guests, with the Swordfish being particularly good.

Returning to the river and just up from the lock is the Isis Farmhouse, which only opens from Friday to Sunday all day (Sunday till 6pm), with Thursday added during the summer. The bar person had never heard of CAMRA but there was the usual barrel of Appleford Brewery Brightwell Gold on the counter. They sometimes have Shotover or another local ale instead, and you will have to ask what as the name is not usually shown.

STEVE LAWRENCE

Oxford Branch Diary

Saturday 15 August Town & Village Pub of the Year Survey Trip

Minibus trip to visit the candidates for our annual award. Please book a seat on the bus with Tony on 07588 181313.

Wednesday 2 September Branch Meeting

At the Old Bookbinders, Victor Street, Jericho, Oxford
Starts at 19.30

Regular monthly meeting with pre-meeting social at the Victoria, Walton Street (18.30) and the Harcourt Arms (19.00)

Saturday 5 September Regional Social

Masons Arms, Headington Quarry
Meet from 1pm

The annual social event for all the region's branches, with the Aunt Sally match and, of course, a fantastic selection of beers at the Headington Beer Festival

Saturday 12 September Town & Village Pub of the Year Survey Trip

The second minibus trip to visit the candidates for our annual award. Please book a seat on the bus with Tony on 07588 181313.

Saturday 19 September Beer Festival Social

At the Cricketers Arms, Littleworth. Meet there from 1pm.

Pub News

Abingdon

BREWERY TAP: This is one of the pubs put up for sale by Greene King as part of its agreement to sell off some pubs as a condition of its acquisition of Spirit Inns being accepted by the Competitions and Markets Authority. We wish landlord Matt Heritage well whatever happens, and hope the pub – which rarely if ever sells Greene King real ales – will continue to take an independent line.

Begbroke

ROYAL SUN: Punch Taverns has listed this pub as “Coming Soon” in its online directory of pubs available to new tenants, so a change is in the offing. Situated on the A44 between Oxford and Woodstock, it has a strong food offering.

Colehill

RADNOR ARMS: Old Bog brewery beers, previously made on site at the Mason's Arms in Headington, are now sometimes available at this nice old country pub alongside the Old Forge brews also produced here (also see Brewery News). On a recent visit the pub was serving Old Forge Hammer and Tongs (4.2%) and Blacksmith's Gold (4%), with Sledgehammer (5%) and Anvil Ale (3.8%) also available at times, plus Old Bog Blonde and Bitter (4.8%). All beers are served straight from the barrel and brewed just yards away from where you are standing, with a real cider (Tumbledown) also available on hand pump. Prices are reasonable with all ales at £3.15 a pint and a “pie and pint” deal for £5.50, plus basket meals from £6.50, main courses from

£7.50 and sandwiches and jacket potatoes for £4.95.



Northmoor

RED LION: Bought by villagers to save it from closure last year, the pub has scooped the Best Newcomer prize at this year's Cotswold Food and Drink Awards. It is run by chef Ian Neale and his fiancée Lisa Lyne, who said: “With plenty of good pubs in this area, we know we have to try extra hard, and we do, so it's amazing to be given this recognition. It's really hard work, but people come from all the surrounding towns and villages to sample the freshly prepared local food, the local draught ales, the warm welcome in a lovely old building and the country setting. And we have 90 village shareholders who keep us busy, even in the winter.”

Oxford

AMPLEFORTH ARMS: The very positive group trying to save this pub on the Risinghurst estate, which was closed earlier this year, is awaiting registration of the pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), giving the community breathing space to try to raise a bid. The group is in contact with the agents selling the pub for Punch Taverns and has its next meeting at 6.30pm on 4th September in the community centre, with all welcome.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD:

The city centre free house, which closed in January, is being converted into a Caribbean themed restaurant for chain Turtle Bay.

JACK RUSSELL: Closed and bought by a private individual who wants to demolish it and build housing, this derelict Marston pub is one of the properties sold by Greene King to Hawthorne Leisure, with apparently no concern for locals who might have liked a choice in the future of their pub. A local group wants to register it as an ACV but faces a battle to save the pub's future. The Save the Jack Russell group says that with no other point of contact locally, social interaction will be lost.

ROYAL STANDARD: A much needed refurbishment took place at this London Road pub in June, with a new holding manager, Jadi Burgess, taking over. The Greene King managed pub serves real ales from the GK range with occasional guests, but struggles to attract real ale drinkers with a much wider choice available at the Britannia a few yards away.

South Hinksey

GENERAL ELIOTT: The village pub's first beer festival since re-opening, over the weekend of 10-12 July, was a resounding success with several hundred extra customers enjoying the pub and its extensive garden. Over 15 ales were laid on, including Prescott's Track Record (also a regular) and Super 6, Milestone's Loxley Ale, ABC's Punk Is Dead, and Elmtree's Mad Maudie, plus a range of real ciders including Weston's Costwold's Muscle Man Raspberry, No Brainer and Yellow Hammer. The next beer festival is from 11-13 September.

Wantage

SHOULDER OF MUTTON: Former White Horse branch Pub of the Year the Shoulder of Mutton in Wantage has reopened with a new manager after long-serving landlord Peter Fowler moved away. Guy Ripley formerly ran the Plough in Witney and worked for a while behind the bar in the Shoulder of Mutton a few years ago. The beer range has become more variable, and on one Sunday recently there were only about four beers available, a major reduction on the 10 or so previously.



West Hanney

PLOUGH: The Plough in West Hanney, a 16th century thatched cottage, re-opened on 11 July after a successful community buy-out from Punch Taverns arranged by a local group, the Hanney Community Association (HCA). In September 2014 when Punch Taverns placed the pub on the market, the villagers of East and West Hanney soon rallied round, and started work to purchase the Plough. It was soon apparent that the best route for

The Hanneys to purchase the Plough was via a private limited company, so the HCA formed Hanney Community Pub Ltd (HCPL) to act as its vehicle for the purchase. West Hanney Parish Council applied for an Asset of Community Value order on the pub in order to offer some protection for the community while it worked towards purchasing the pub.

Directors of HCPL worked tirelessly for several months and in February 2015 an offer was made to Punch Taverns, which was accepted. On 20 April a share offering was launched to members of HCA only, which ultimately resulted in 119 investors raising £400,000. Contracts were exchanged on 20 May and HCPL completed purchase of The Plough on 16 June. It closed for three weeks for renovations and re-opened to the public on Saturday 11 July.

The pub is owned by HCPL, but the pub business is run by a professionally experienced landlord and lady, Phil Curtis and Fi Eaton. The new look community pub is open seven days a week and offers good food and real ale, but CAMRA's White Horse branch was slightly concerned to hear that a deal had been done with Greene King, which doesn't bode too well for the choice of beers.

We rely on contributions from members, readers and publicans for information for this column. Please send your pub news to pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Local pubs in Greene King sell-off

Greene King is in the process of acquiring the Spirit Pub Company and as part of the acquisition, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requires Greene King to sell 16 working pubs, eight of which are around the White Horse district or Oxford. These are the Brewery Tap, Abingdon; the Fox Inn, Boars Hill; the Fish, Sutton Courtenay; the Ladygrove, Didcot; the Fox, Steventon; the Pack Horse, Milton Hill; the Plough, East Hendred; and the Hare, West Hendred. If the deal is accepted there will be a 90-day period for Greene King to dispose of the pubs.

Matt Heritage, landlord of the Brewery Tap in Abingdon and a regular in the Good Beer Guide, has said it is "business as usual" and that the sale might lead to new opportunities. Some landlords might bid for the pubs themselves, but there is also a possibility that the 16 pubs might be sold off as a block.

The Hare is the only pub on the list which is closed. However, the committee of a group of West Hendred villagers who are trying to buy the pub have enlisted the help of local MP, Ed Vaizey, to persuade Greene King to sell the Hare separately, which is allowed under CMA rules.

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Brewery News

New craft brewery for Oxford?

A micro-brewery could form part of a proposed new Hotel Indigo in the centre of Oxford, close to the site of Morrells' Lion Brewery which closed in 1998. A proposal to build a 150-room hotel on the site of the mid-20th century Cooper Callas building on the corner of Paradise Street and St Thomas Street has been submitted by a developer, but this would also involve demolition of two 19th century buildings including the former Brewery Gate pub which was converted for housing a few years ago.

The Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society has objected to the scale of the hotel, but has also called for the historic buildings – the other is the former “horse hospital” which looked after the brewery’s dray animals – to be incorporated into the development. It says a historic pub incorporated into the hotel would be a major asset. Planning permission is expected to be sought in the autumn.

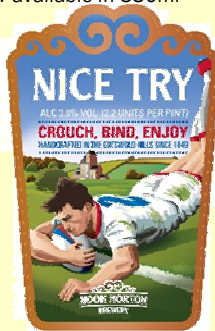
Hook Norton

Two point-of-sale kits are available for pubs preparing for the Rugby World Cup starting on 18 September with the England v Fiji match. The Lion kit contains Watch it Here posters, Magic Minute posters, Lion Rugby Ball Key Rings and Bar Runners, while the Nice Try Kit contains Watch it Here and Win a Gallon of Beer Posters, Customer Collector Card and Pump Clips.

Marketing manager Angela Francis said: “With just a few

weeks to go until the first match, pubs have already started to plan their activity for the autumn. Cask ale is growing in popularity with Rugby, so this is an ideal combination and promotional opportunity for the brewery.”

Nice Try was launched this year for the Six Nations and sales exceeded expectation. It is a 3.8% auburn beer with a smooth malty light aroma, a mellow malty bitter making easy drinking for the whole match! As well as cask, it is now available in 330ml bottles.



Old Bog

Andy Meeson, who previously brewed the only beer produced within the city boundary behind the Mason’s Arms pub in Headington Quarry, has switched production to a larger plant at the Radnor Arms pub in Coleshill, West Oxfordshire. This micro-brewery is known as the Old Forge and continues to produce beers for the Radnor Arms, with Andy now brewing this too as the previous brewer ceased work last year. A third brew is also now produced at the Radnor site, as it has taken over brewing for the Halfpenny brewery in nearby Lechlade, which is behind the Crown pub. Andy said that the facilities at the Mason’s Arms

were too small, and that the Old Forge plant offered more opportunities. Old Bog beers will continue to be produced and sold at the Mason’s, where they are often available at weekends.

Shotover

Mattias Sjoberg, founder of Compass Brewery, will be joining Shotover Brewery in Horspath as head brewer in September. Shotover’s owner Ed Murray said: “Mattias brings a wealth of brewing and business experience, and will help us expand our production capacity and play a big part in the development of the business.” Mattias left Compass in February.

The last two casks of Shotover John Henry 7.1% Export India Pale Ale are being kept for the CAMRA Oxford Beer Festival in October. The beer was brewed in February to a historic 1864 recipe to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of The Oxford School of Art, the institution that eventually became Oxford Brookes University. The limited edition bottle conditioned version is on sale at Brookes University colonnade shop while stocks last.

Vale/ABC

The summer special bitter is Ecstasy Of Gold using American El Dorado hops (4.0%). For the Rugby World Cup 2015 it is producing The Good Game using all English hops, a copper beer at 4.1%. Turning to bottled ale, Marks & Spencer is now stocking Vale Brewery’s SIBA award winning Gravitas and Red Kite in food hall outlets across the UK – well done Vale!

Vale will also be out in force at this year's Brill Beer Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend, which also includes more unusual ciders, a classic and sports car show, and plenty of entertainment.

At Aylesbury Brewhouse (ABC), head brewer Haydon Overton has been taking the plaudits for the most successful beer in its 3½-year history, the Limited Edition red IPA Punk Is Dead. With ABC brewing weekly you'll be finding new beers in the Brewery Shop behind the Hop Pole every week.

West Berkshire



On 19th September, West Berkshire Brewery will be celebrating its 20th birthday in the best way known, with a beer festival. Oktoberwest promises to be a fun, light-hearted event complete with music, authentic Bavarian food and a huge selection of real ales and craft beers. Book your tickets now by calling 01635 202968 or visit the online shop.

Also to mark its 20th anniversary, throughout August, a seasonal special Double Decadence (4.5%)

will be available for just £20 for 12 bottles. To mark the day of the first brew 20 years ago, on Tuesday 25th August WBB will be offering 20% off all online and retail purchases including Oktoberwest tickets and brewery tours.

Blindside Flanker is the next special release in celebration of the Rugby World Cup. This proper bitter has a broad bitterness with a full bodied flavour (4.3%), and is available from cask throughout September and October.

XT

Building work has started to double the size of the brewery and add a new tasting room for the XT and Animal Brewing ranges. The extra space will also allow for installation of new vessels to extend the craft keg beer range, to develop more aged soured beers, and oak barrel conditioning of stronger stouts and porters.

The XT summer beer 14 is a Crazy Hazy Wheat Saison beer, following the style of the farmhouse beers of Wallonia. The wheat malt and saison yeast give a haze to the beer and add a refreshingly fruity flavour. A bigger, beefier Wheat Beer at 6% is lined up for later in the summer, and is joined by a brace of new black IPAs... Panther: lurking in the dark at 3.2%, and the blinding XPA-Black at 7.2%.

The Animals have been messing about down on the farm with a range of single variety beers – specialising in a particular malt or hop. The most recent additions by the ale critters have been Dachshund, a crystal rye amber beer using specialist rye malts

from Germany; and a single hop variety, using Admiral hops from Herefordshire. Platypus is a crisp pale ale brewed to showcase the wonderful Galaxy Hops from Australia.

The next club night for members to drink beers from the range and to try club exclusive Baby Animal proto-brews will be Thursday 3rd September. The next Open Day at the brewery will be the Oxtoberfest on Saturday October 3rd, with music, food, beer and fun for all the family.

Wychwood

The Hobgoblin has treated himself to a new toy and it's a head-turner! The Legendary One has been touring the country this summer in his brand new mobile bar – The Hob Mog, commissioned by Unimog specialists Atkinson Vos It started life as a Russian Army vehicle and, following an extensive refurbishment, has been transformed into a state-of-the-art festival bar. The Hob Mog Bar has appeared at over 30 UK events serving Hobgoblin to thousands of revellers, so look out for it if you are heading to any outdoor events.

August sees the return of firm favourite, Wychwood Bountiful, an ale of tremendous complexity delivering a rich, fruity taste and a stack of chestnut colour. With the Rugby World Cup kicking off in September, Bountiful will be closely followed by Dirty Tackle (4%), available in September/October. Avoid the scrum and make sure you score an early try as its most popular seasonal ale makes a winning return. According to Wychwood, it kicks its opponents into touch....

Bermondsey's Beer Mile

Dave Cogdell does the Bermondsey Walk - rather than the Lambeth Walk made famous in song!



THE DAY before midsummer was overcast with a hint of rain when eight intrepid branch members arrived in South London to sample the delights of the Bermondsey Mile, a collection of breweries (predominantly craft) that have set up under or near the main railway line over the last few years. Every Saturday they lay out a bar, trestle tables, pallets and chairs, inside their premises or outside where possible, as London does not take kindly to drinking on the streets. Here their own keg/bottle/canned craft ales can be consumed, whilst chatting over the merits or disadvantages of these in comparison to cask ales.

Our first port of call was to the Fourpure Brewery, just round the corner from South Bermondsey station and sited in an industrial unit on the south side of the railway line. It turned out to be one of the largest operations we were to visit and was very well run by knowledgeable staff. On our visit there were nine offerings –

Pils 4.7%, Session IPA 4.2%, Pale 5%, Oatmeal Stout 5.1%, Dry Hop Pils 4.7%, Skyliner (American Wheat) 4.8%, Hoptart (Sour, Dry Hopped) 3.8%, Roux 2015 (French Farmhouse Saison) 5.6%, and West Coast Saison (Dry Hop) 5.9% – all served in two-thirds glasses and proving to be some of the best of the day.

Back to the north side of the line and a ten-minute walk away we found the Partizan brewery sited under the railway. It was somewhat cramped inside, but outside they had utilised pallets for makeshift tables and seating. They specialised in one-off brews made in the ex-Kernel Brewery kit, and available on the day were a Pale, 3 Saisons (Summer Berry, Le Moyne and Raspberry and Lemon), Atomium and Triple. Amongst the bottled offerings was a Stout Porter at 11.7%, sold for a measly £20!

Continuing for another 10 minutes to the Kernel brewery, we had our first disappointment

as the queues here were very long. This was the oldest brewery that we were due to visit and its beers are regarded as some of the best, but the venue closed at 2pm and the line was very slow moving so we reluctantly decided to move on. A few minutes down the road was Brew by Numbers, sited in an arch under the main line and offering a Saison, a Golden Ale, a Red Ale, a Witbeer and a Session IPA. Those sampled were very fresh with loads to challenge the taste buds. The beer was so good here we thought about a second, but the queue was advancing outside the entrance so it was time to move on.

Crossing back to the south side of the line we went to U Brew, an outlet that allows members the opportunity to brew their own beer. It also has the backing of Brewdog, but once again our luck was out – a private function was in full swing.

Back under the railway and a



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Underneath the arches at Brew By Numbers; the group starts out at Forepure; real ale is available at the Southwark Brewery; the small bar at Anspach and Hobday pictures by Dave Cogdell, Pete Flynn and Michael Sibbald

few minutes later we found ourselves in the Bottle Shop, where as the name suggests you can choose from over 200 bottles to take home. However, you can also drink them on the premises, along with some changing draught ales from hand pumps, as they have a seating area on two levels. It was quite busy on the day and "crowd controllers" were used to keep drinkers within cordoned areas.

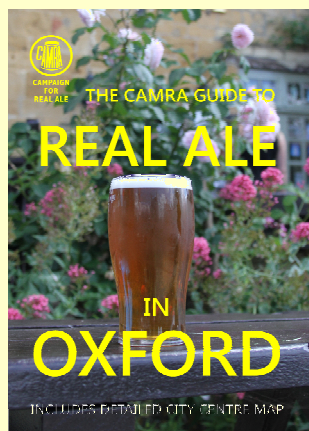
A few doors down we found the Anspach and Hobday Brewery with six taps available serving a range of ales including a very palatable stout, and some took advantage of the three third-pint paddle so that several beers could be tasted. A large area is set out for seating and the best toilets were found here! The venue was the only one which had extended its opening hours to include Friday evenings, and we also heard that the owners were eyeing up the presently closed Marquis of Wellington pub opposite, so some changes may be afoot here.

A short walk took us to our last planned stop, Southwark Brewery, which is the new kid on the block. It is the only one to produce cask ales and to serve beer in pint glasses. A chat with the brewer enhanced the visit and the beers, which were Bankside Blonde 3.8%, Bermondsey Best 4.4%, LPA 4%, Gold 5.2% and Harvard American Pale 5.5%.

Finally we headed back to London Bridge tube station to begin our trip back home, but we had 30 minutes to spare so decided to drop into the Market Porter pub next to Borough Market, for a final taster – my London Porter was excellent. All in all it had been a great day out, but if it gets any more popular, some of the venues and service will need to be improved or even expanded if the Bermondsey Mile is to continue in its present form.

DAVE COGDELL

Oxford Real Ale Map launched



Oxford CAMRA launched its first Real Ale map of Oxford in August. The map is targeted at visitors to the city, and has a large-scale map showing selected tourist attractions, plus importantly, the locations of the city's thirty pubs that serve real ale.

Full details and a description of all of the pubs is included on the reverse. The map will be available free of charge in selected pubs and tourist attractions shortly.

Thanks go to those who have researched the information for the map, and to our advertisers who have supported this venture and made it possible.

HOWZAT!

Stuart Bull, owner of the Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth, writes on the importance of being in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide



Dave the editor: "Why don't you write about what it's like to be in the Good Beer Guide?"

Me: "Great idea, Dave; trouble is, I might end up with egg on my face if I don't get in the next edition!" (I'm paraphrasing, but you get the gist.)

The Good Beer Guide. It's something of an institution, isn't it? There can be few bookshelves amongst lovers if real ale that don't include a copy, even if it is a couple of years old. But I bet you can guarantee it's well-thumbed and probably dog-eared. For me, the GBG is the ultimate publication to be in for a publican.

There are other guides of course, but the GBG is the one where you are judged by your customers -- CAMRA members -- and to get in it you have to keep doing your job to the highest standard to maintain your position. You simply never know when your ale is going to be assessed, so it always keeps you on your toes.

I don't think that the Cricketers Arms is in any of the other guides, but if we are, I have

never been informed; and to me, it doesn't matter. Neither have we applied for any of the other beer quality accreditation schemes (you know, the ones where you get a plaque to put up on the outside of the pub), because we don't need to. The GBG is the gold standard and the only accreditation we need.

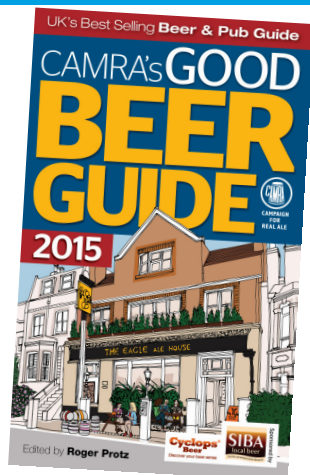
We had always intended to try and get the Cricketers Arms into the GBG when we purchased the pub back in late 2007. As a frequent owner of the GBG myself, I'd been familiar with using it whenever we visited a new town, city or village. Our big breakthrough came when we started something that at the time we called our SixSixes Ale Portfolio. We decided very early on that we would only sell local ales. In pre-dating the CAMRA LocAle initiative, we were lucky enough to become the first pub in the Oxford CAMRA branch to be awarded LocAle accreditation; and we have only sold local ales since. A listing in the GBG soon followed, and we have now been in it for five years on the trot.

Will we be in the 2016 edition? I have absolutely no idea but I hope we will. For us, it's

incredibly important to be in but CAMRA keeps a very tight lid on whoever gets into the guide. We will not find out until some time in early September, just a few days before the guide is published and on the shelves. Talking of September, we have our Autumn Beer and Sausage Festival on 18-20th, the perfect opportunity to sample ales local to Oxford from breweries old and new. Thinking about it, having two beer festivals a year is probably a good way of keeping the Cricketers on the GBG radar.

As I write this, it is an ugly rainy Friday evening in July. It's not even warm. It's been chucking it down all day. I have just come up from the bar to write this column (it is deadline day after all, but the bar is busy. Some customers are local and enjoying their favoured tippie. Others are here for Angie's fine home-made food. And there are a few ladies and gentlemen that I don't recognise, some hugging pints of real ale. They could be new to the village, or just passing through. Or maybe, they are destination ale drinkers.

You've heard of a destination



food pub, right? Well, we're a destination ale pub. As well as people coming to the Cricketers Arms for food, we also attract people with our ale, using – you guessed it -- the GBG. We don't have a huge selection by any means, but our ales are always local and they are always (big gulp and fingers crossed) in the finest condition. No cloudy pints, remember. I've said that before.

And this table of people could be CAMRA members who may just have their say about the quality of our ale. They really do hold the future of our business in their hands and if our ales disappoint them, they can rate us badly and that could mean failure to get into the guide. In one fell swoop, we could have lost exposure to the biggest consumer group in the country and its annual publication, a guide that puts our name prominently in front of anyone using it as a research tool for visiting Oxford, whatever the reason for their visit.

There are numerous other advantages that come with being in the GBG, so we'll try and stay in it for as long as we can.

Beer Festival Diary

Friday 28 - Monday 31

August

Summer Beer Festival

Kings Head & Bell, East St Helens Street, Abingdon

01235 525362

www.kingsheadandbell-abingdon.com

Friday 4 - Sunday 6
September

Bunkfest 2015

Kinecroft, Wallingford

30 beers & ciders

www.bunkfest.co.uk

Friday 4 - Sunday 6
September

Headington Beer Festival

Mason's Arms, Quarry School Place, Headington, Oxford

45 beers plus 15 ciders & perries

01865 764579

www.themasonsarmshq.co.uk

Saturday 5 - Sunday 6
September

Perch Beer & Cider Festival

The Perch Inn, Binsey Lane, Binsey, Oxford

01865 728891

www.the-perch.co.uk

Friday 11 - Sunday 13
September

Bo Peep Cider Festival

Bo Peep Caravan Park, Aynho Road, Adderbury, nr Banbury

100+ ciders & perries plus real ales

bopeepciderfest.moonfruit.com

Friday 11 - Sunday 13
September

General Elliott Beer Festival

Manor Road, South Hinksey, Oxford

01865 598068

www.thegeneraleliott.co.uk

Friday 18 - Sunday 20
September

Littleworth Beer & Sausage Festival

Cricketer's Arms, Littleworth, nr Wheatley

01865 872738

www.cricketers-arms.co.uk

Friday 25 - Sunday 27
September

Bletchington Beer Festival

Bletchington Sports and Social Club, Oxford Road, Bletchington, nr Kidlington

10 beers plus 3 ciders

01869 351866

bletchingtonsportsandsocialclub.com

Friday 2 - Sunday 4
October

Brewery Tap Octoberfest

Ock Street, Abingdon

30+ beers & ciders

01235 521655

www.thebrewerytap.net

Saturday 3 October
Tree Hotel Octoberfest

Iffley Village OX4 4EY

Tickets £5

01865 775974

Thursday 15 - Saturday 17 October

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The dates for the 18th Oxford Beer and Cider Festival have been confirmed as 15-17 October. We will open the doors at 5pm on the Thursday at our regular venue, the Town Hall on St Aldate's. Our bold logo this year has been designed by Keith Rigley.

Once again we shall be offering 140 different real ales and around 60 ciders and perries. For those visiting us on the Saturday, we keep 40 additional casks for sale only on that day to ensure that you have a good selection to choose from.

Our festival is staffed by volunteers, so if you are able to offer some of your time to help out then please contact Steve Lawrence at staffing@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Please remember that we are restricted in the number of people we can admit to the Town Hall so advise you to turn up early. Put the dates in your diaries and we look forward to seeing you at the Town Hall in October.

OXFORD

BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

2015 OXFORD TOWN HALL
THURS-SAT, OCTOBER 15-17

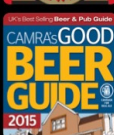
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*The Masons Arms
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*Oxford CAMRA City pub of the year
2004, 2005, 2010 & 2014*



*The 14th Headington Beer Festival
September 4th, 5th & 6th 2015
Over 45 Real Ales, 15 Ciders and the Belgian Bar*



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A Campaign

of Two Halves



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Complete the Direct Debit form and you will receive 15 months membership for the price of 12 and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription.

Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus or call **01727 867201**. All forms should be addressed to the: Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

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I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association

I enclose a cheque for _____

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Applications will be processed within 21 days

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01/15

**Campaigning for Pub Goers
& Beer Drinkers**

**Enjoying Real Ale
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Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society Service User Number

To the Manager _____ Bank or Building Society

Address _____

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Membership Number

Name

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Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

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Date



**This Guarantee should be attached
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- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

The CAMRA Pub Discount Scheme gives licensees the chance to promote their real ale offering to card carrying CAMRA members by offering them money of a pint or half pint.

The pubs in our area that offer a discount are listed below:

Abingdon

Brewery Tap
Kings Head & Bell
Nags Head on the Thames
Narrows *
Old Anchor
White Horse

Oxford

Britannia, Headington
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



Tony's travels

Branch Chairman **Tony Goulding** gets out and about

WE ARE always looking for volunteers to distribute the *Oxford Drinker* to a couple of pubs, which is very rewarding for discovering more of the many pubs in our branch area. Sometimes there is a change of licensee or the clientele, the décor or very occasionally the choice of beer.

A recent visit to the Evenlode on the A40 at Eynsham found four beers from the Marston's/Wychwood selection with Brakspear Gold a very tasty choice, so different from the rare (for the county) Butcombe beers of a couple of years ago.

Coming down to Oxford, the Gardener's Arms in Plantation Road is now a must-visit free house, an old cottage once surrounded by market gardens which now has four ever-changing beers plus a real cider, a bit of a change from the previous Marston's selection or even the Morrells Bitter and Varsity of 20 years ago.

Another pub that's seen major change is the Chester, on Chester Street off Iffley Road, which re-opened last year after several years of closure. This do-not-pass free house serves up to five mostly Loose Cannon beers, a far cry from the tasty Tetley Bitter of 20 years ago. The Britannia in Headington is another former Tetley Bitter pub of that era, which now serves

two Brakspear and six guest beers with Black Sheep Bitter in good form.

The odd Sunday lunchtime drink has now crept into our travels with a regular two halves of the ever-changing ciders, plus Theakston's Old Peculier, at a top drinking den on St Giles, the Lamb and Flag.

At Witney one Sunday lunchtime we found a super tasting Old Hooky at the ever popular Eagle Tavern, followed by a very tasty pint of North Cotswold brewery Cotswold Bitter at the relaxing Angel, overlooking Church Green. Bringing back memories of 40 years ago, I made another very rewarding visit to the Kings Arms on Broad Street in Witney, where the rear, former men-only bar served a thirst quenching and tasty St Austell Tribute in unusually quiet surroundings.

The Woodman at North Leigh, a Punch Taverns house, has re-opened after an interior refit and serves up to three beers from the Punch range, with more emphasis on food under new landlords. The Plough in High Street, Witney, has also re-opened after a tidy-up. This Admiral Taverns house serves up to three beers from their range along with food served all day. In the early 1980s it had only Courage Bitter on dispense.

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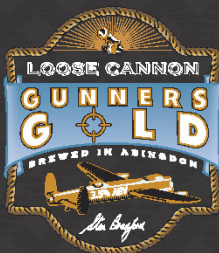
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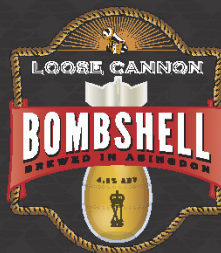
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