



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

Issue 94  
March - May 2016

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# the Oxford Drinker



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.

We have recently relaunched our website and pdf downloads are now available there once again.

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# Welcome

## ...the Nanny State is at it again

**SO IT'S OFFICIAL** – I'm a problem drinker, as I imagine are many of you reading this, because we drink more than a pint of average strength beer a day. That – or 14 units per week, to be precise – is the new “safe” limit of alcohol consumption as decreed by the Chief Medical Officer, who adds helpfully that there really is no safe limit at all.

Much as I sympathise with people who really do have an alcohol problem, and the family members and medics who have to deal with it, this is going too far (and I'm amused, by the way, that BrewDog's 0.5% “alcohol-free” beer is called Nanny State!) With tougher drink driving limits also on the way, why not ban alcohol altogether and usher in a new era of Prohibition? That looked rather fun in America in the 1920s, as illegal joints blossomed. And all those people now needing jobs, including many asylum seekers, could find work enforcing Prohibition with an iron fist. Simple!

One way to cut down might be to introduce a revolutionary half-pint glass, as Irish pub Simon Lambert and Sons of Wexford has done (see right), giving people the look and feel of drinking a pint while having only

a half. Sadly, they were all nicked as souvenirs within days.

A recent study by Oxford University, no less, revealed that going to the pub is actually good for you, and that people classed as “locals” are happier than those who aren't. Well I admit that you can go to the pub and have a soft drink (though the sugar might kill you sooner than alcohol), but somehow that isn't as much fun. The serious point about tougher drinking guidelines and drink driving limits is that they will drive more pubs out of business.

In this edition there's the usual bag of good and bad news, with a new real ale venue on Cowley Road but some of our favourite pubs closed or under threat. You can also read about Oxford CAMRA's new chairman-elect, Pete Flynn, and enjoy our new



columnist, publican Matt Ford. We take another trip Down Memory Lane to recall the Roebuck, and the kind of characters that used to frequent our hostellers.

There's news too about Oxford's Pub of the Year, the Lamb and Flag, chosen in a poll among committed CAMRA members from outside Oxford who reviewed all the city's Good Beer Guide entries and made their choice. That absolves us from any accusation of favouritism, and we changed the system last year after campaigns by some pubs to motivate their regulars to vote for them and “do down” the opposition, with some even signing up people to join CAMRA just for the voting. We considered that against the spirit of the competition, but no solution will please everyone.

Oxford CAMRA has recently signed up its 1,000th member, a major achievement, but we'd like to see more of you at branch meetings and socials. And rest assured, you're not all problem drinkers!

This edition of the *Oxford Drinker* carries the dates March-May, but we will revert to bi-monthly publication in June.

**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.oxford.camra.org.uk/mailling-lists](http://www.oxford.camra.org.uk/mailling-lists)

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# Cowley Road Crawl

**Dave Richardson** seeks out real ale in East Oxford

**COWLEY ROAD** is known as Oxford's multi-cultural thoroughfare, with more drinking dens, cafes, restaurants and exotic shops than any part of the city outside the centre. It's lively with students and locals until late at night, yet doesn't merit a single entry in the Good Beer Guide. Surely it can't all be lager and craft keg?

## City Arms

This rather gaudy pub at the far end of Cowley Road's commercial area has had various incarnations and names, being once known as the University and City Arms and then the Firkin micro-brewery. Recently refurbished, it is light, bright, loud and with a "young" feel, with a rather nice tile-effect floor which I might have made close acquaintance with had I drunk the Cocoa Psycho. This is one of five craft kegs available, a BrewDog stout at a cool 10% ABV served, thankfully, only in halves.

This is the kind of place you might expect only a token presence for real ale, but four hand pumps were available serving an ever changing range. This being December, these were seasonal ales Scrooged (4%) and Christmas Cracker

(4.5%) from Cottage Brewing, plus Prescott's Chequered Flag and Lilley's Mulled Cider – a good selection, with four other Lilley's ciders available from boxes.

The pub atmosphere is retained with pool and live sports on one side of the pub, while the menu is mainly posh burgers and hot dogs. Overall I liked it more than I expected.

## Library

Having read the lavish praise heaped on this little pub in a recent edition of *The Guardian*, I was keen to venture inside what looks from the front very much like a terraced house with bay window. It has a small bar at the front, a basement where live music is staged, and a small beer garden. No books are on offer – just "book wallpaper"!

*The Guardian* praised it for its craft kegs, so it's not an essential stop for the real ale drinker. But one hand pump was serving a lovely winter ale called Krampus Lord of Yule (named after a sci-fi/horror book), brewed by Vale offshoot ABC Brewhouse. This well-kept ale alone was worth the visit, and I will certainly look in again to see what's on offer.

## Cowley Retreat

Under the same management as the Lighthouse on Park End Street, this large and noisy pub has had various names including the Hobgoblin and Ampney Cottage. It's clearly highly successful attracting young clientele, but don't expect it to live up to its name with a peaceful atmosphere.

Six hand pumps were available, but as two of these were serving the ubiquitous Doom Bar, another GK's Old Speckled Hen, and another Old Rosie cider, the dedicated CAMRA member has to dig deeper. More interesting were Black Sheep Best Bitter and my choice, the ever reliable Mad Goose (4.2%) from Purity, a hoppy copper ale. Did you know that Purity's Ubu is named after a dog? Nor did I.

## James Street Tavern

This is pretty much Real Ale Central as far as Cowley Road is concerned, and has always been under consideration for the Good Beer Guide since the landlord secured a deal with owner Greene King to sell a wider range of real ales. It has no fewer than 10 hand pumps, and four of these were "in-house" – Fireside (4.5%), its





own badged JST Ale (3.9%), Hardy and Hanson's Rocking Rudolph and my choice for a half, Belhaven's Smoke Stack Stout (4%). The guest ales were local, including Village Idiot and Rudolph the Red Nosed White Horse from White Horse, and Shotover Trinity. Thatcher Heritage was the real cider on offer.

The JST has a very old-fashioned interior which some potential visitors might find off-putting, but others would find endearing. It's certainly a bit rough around the edges, and the purple walls wouldn't appeal to everyone. But a real log fire and the sight of people of all ages playing cards (Texas Hold 'Em Poker, apparently) and board games reminds you that this is a proper pub. Long may it remain so – and it has the best choice of ale in these parts.

## Star

Set a little way off the main drag on Rectory Road, this is a free house and again, one with a traditional pub atmosphere. It hasn't gone for real ale in a big way, but the choice at the three pumps was interesting. One beer from XT is always available, and as XT15 had just gone off, I opted for the tasty pale ale Manta Ray from XT's

Animal range. If I had stayed longer I might have tried Blind Jack, a 3.7% amber rye ale from Yorkshire brewer Rooster's – definitely one I'd never seen in Oxford before.

Unlike the Library, the Star has real books as it operates a free book exchange. It has a real "back street boozer" atmosphere with a vast selection of board games, low music, and two pool tables out the back. Definitely worth a short detour.

## Big Society

Another pub praised by *The Guardian* for its wide choice of craft kegs, this enormous pub was historically known as the Elm Tree before becoming a Chinese restaurant and reverting to a pub a couple of years ago. It's noisy, brash and very young, with loud music, table football, and rather odd décor on its tiled walls including cartoons. A very studenty pub, its menu is mainly burgers, hot dogs and fried chicken.

Two real ales were on, and congratulations to local brewery Shotover for badging Big Society Pale Ale (actually Trinity). The other, and my choice, was Prescott's Grand Prix, a satisfying ale at 5.2%.

This pub is probably missable from a real ale standpoint, but at least it has something.

## Harry's

And now for the new kid on the block. Originally called the New Inn and more recently the Corridor, it wasn't a place for CAMRA members with the warning "No Real Ale" appearing in our branch's 2011 pub guide. How things have changed, as a refit and change of ownership have resulted in six non-traditional looking real ale pumps with five being in use on this occasion. Three of these were dispensing Sharp's, but overlooking the Doom Bar and the also easy to find Atlantic, I plumped for the winter ale Nadelik (4.8%), which was exceptionally tasty. The other two ales were provided, again, by Shotover – the own-badged Harry's (which is Trinity), and Lewis, named after the TV detective, which I suspect, at 3.7%, is Prospect.

Harry's still looks a bit like a cocktail bar from the outside, but is well worth venturing in. It goes to prove that the real ale scene along Cowley Road is alive and well, and ever improving despite the spread of craft keg.

# Beer Festival Diary

Compiled by Richard Queralt  
Further details can be found on our  
website [www.oxford.camra.org.uk](http://www.oxford.camra.org.uk)

Friday 11 - Sunday 27

March

## Wetherspoon Real Ale Festival

All JD Wetherspoon pubs & Lloyds  
No1 bars  
[www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk](http://www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk)

Friday 18 - Saturday 19

March

## Winchester Real Ale and Cider Festival

Winchester Guildhall, The  
Broadway, Winchester  
100+ beers, ciders & perries  
[www.winchesterbeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.winchesterbeerfestival.org.uk)

Friday 18 - Saturday 19

March

## Winslow Beer Festival

Winslow Public Hall, Elmfields,  
Winslow, Bucks  
[www.winslowlions.org.uk](http://www.winslowlions.org.uk)

Friday 18 - Sunday 20

March

## White Hart Mini Beer Festival

The White Hart, St Andrew's  
Road, Headington, Oxford  
15 beers  
01865 761737  
[www.twitter.com/TheWhiteHartH](http://www.twitter.com/TheWhiteHartH)

Friday 25 - Monday 28

March

## Black Horse Beer Festival

Faringdon Road, Gozzard's Ford,  
nr Abingdon  
01865 390530  
[www.the-blackhorse.co.uk](http://www.the-blackhorse.co.uk)

Friday 25 - Monday 28

March

## Woodman Easter Beer Festival

New Yatt Road, North Leigh, nr  
Witney  
01993 881790  
[www.thewoodmaninn-norlye.com](http://www.thewoodmaninn-norlye.com)

Friday 1 - Sunday 3 April

## Spring Beer & Cider Festival

The Brewery Tap, Ock Street,  
Abingdon  
01235 521655  
[www.thebrewerytap.net](http://www.thebrewerytap.net)

Friday 15 - Saturday 16

April

## Coventry Beer Festival

Coventry Rugby Football Ground,  
Butts Park Arena, Butts Road,  
Coventry  
90+ beers, ciders & perries  
[www.coventry.camra.org.uk](http://www.coventry.camra.org.uk)

Friday 22 - Saturday 23

April

## Gloucester Beer & Cider Festival

Blackfriars Priory, Ladybellegate  
Street, off Southgate Street,  
Gloucester  
100 beers plus 30 ciders &  
perries  
[www.gloucesterbeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.gloucesterbeerfestival.org.uk)

Friday 22 - Sunday 24 April

## Spring Beer Festival

The Nag's Head, Bridge Street,  
Abingdon  
01235 524516  
[www.thenagshheadonthethames.co.uk](http://www.thenagshheadonthethames.co.uk)

Thursday 28 April - Sunday

1 May

## Reading Beer & Cider Festival

Christchurch Meadows, George  
Street, Caversham  
This is a new venue but is close  
to the original  
[www.readingbeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.readingbeerfestival.org.uk)

Friday 29 April - Monday 2

May

## Long Itchington Beer Festival

"1 Village, 6 Pubs, 4 Days"  
Long Itchington, Warwickshire (on

the A423 north of Banbury)  
[www.longitchingtonbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.longitchingtonbeerfestival.co.uk)

Saturday 30 April

## Witney Beer Festival

St Mary's Church, Church Green,  
Witney  
[www.witneybeerfestival.com](http://www.witneybeerfestival.com)

Wednesday 4- Sunday 7

May

## Royal Blenheim Beer Festival

St Ebbe's Street, Oxford  
'Star Wars' themed festival  
based on 'May the Fourth'  
01865 242355  
[www.royalblenheim.co.uk](http://www.royalblenheim.co.uk)

## Banbury Beer & Cider Festival

Postponed. Venue unavailable. A  
winter festival is planned instead.  
[www.northoxon.camra.org.uk](http://www.northoxon.camra.org.uk)

Friday 20 - Sunday 22 May

## White Hart Beer Festival

The White Hart, St Andrew's  
Road, Headington, Oxford  
01865 761737  
[www.twitter.com/TheWhiteHartH](http://www.twitter.com/TheWhiteHartH)

Friday 27 - Sunday 29 May

## Rokefest Beer and Music Festival

Home Sweet Home, Roke, nr  
Wallingford  
[www.rokefest.com](http://www.rokefest.com)

Saturday 28 - Monday 30

May

## Swindon & Cricklade Railway Real Ale & Cider Festival

Blunsdon Station, Tadpole Lane,  
Blunsdon, nr Swindon

Saturday 4 June

## Great Chadlington Beer Festival

Chadlington Memorial Hall,  
Chapel Row, Chadlington





# 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.

◆ ◆

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# Sex, Drugs\*, and Rock'n'Roll Beer!

**Dave Richardson** joins a branch outing to a micro-brewery, plus of course a few pubs

**I WAS ON** the “blind” tasting panel which chose the Beer of the Festival at Oxford Town Hall last October, but when the winner was announced as Turpin Brewery's Golden Citrus (4.2%) I must admit I hadn't heard of either brewery or beer. That changed when the branch minibus set out for Hook Norton in deepest north Oxfordshire – not to visit the renowned brewery of that name, but a micro-brewery on a farm just outside the village.

This is where John Romer and his wife have run a horse riding business for nearly 30 years. Brewing only started here in 2013, but John has had a taste for great beer since visiting Belgium to help build a music studio. His background is as a recording engineer, working with stars ranging from Paul McCartney and George Harrison to Jethro Tull and Donovan.

John is a genuine one-man brewing band, and being a very small brewery whose beers are hard to find, it made sense for us to go to him. Golden Citrus is

the core brew, although he also produces specials. He uses fresh yeast from Sure Brew and hops sourced from England, the US, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland, and there sure are plenty of them – nearly three times the hop content of the average beer.

He first started brewing in association with the former Patriot brewery at the Norman Knight pub in nearby Whichford, and is an admirer of Thornbridge brewery and in particular its Kipling and Jaipur beers. Siren Craft, a brewery familiar to Oxford pub-goers, is another influence. When his beers started winning awards at festivals, he started brewing on the farm.

“Doing four to six brews a week is labour intensive, but the joy of it is being able to change the recipe,” said John. “The big problem is a consistent supply of hops, as all micro-breweries want something exotic. The unwritten rule among brewers is never to tell each other what we put in.

“I think of a recipe, make the beer, go out and sell it, and then try and allow other people to drink it. I'm very anti-establishment, and brewing is a black art – it's trial and error, and success may depend on how brave you are. If I decide I want stinging nettles in the beer, I'll put on rubber gloves and go get some.”

After sampling plenty of Golden Citrus, we moved on to one of only two pubs (the other is the White Horse in Banbury) which regularly stock it, although it may sell out quickly. This was the Cherington Arms in Cherington, a village on the Oxfordshire-Warwickshire border, owned by Hook Norton, with whom John is on good terms. Some consumed more Golden Citrus here while others tried the Hooky, or a very tasty Festive Fifty beer, while enjoying a buffet provided by John.

After some tales of rock'n'roll we waved goodbye to John and made our way homewards, diverging from the A3400 to visit the Killingworth Castle, a gastro





**LEFT:** John Romer (left) is presented with his certificate by competition organiser Matt Bullock at the Cherington Arms

-pub in Wootton dating from the 17th century, and once a coaching inn on the Worcester to London route. The owners also run the Ebrington Arms in Chipping Campden and the Yubberton micro-brewery, and our intention was to sample some.

Yubby (3.8%), Goldie (4%) and Yawnie (4.3%) were all indeed on, the Yawnie being especially tasty. A guest beer was also available in the shape of Gun Dog's seasonal Bah! Gundog. This ex-Morland and Greene King pub has been impressively turned around, with boutique cottage accommodation if you want to make a night of it. Main courses cost £13.50 to £21 and sandwiches from £6, examples being flat iron steak with ox cheek, celeriac and onions; and a salmon sandwich with lime mayonnaise.

Our final call was at the Black Prince in Woodstock, a pub I must have driven past dozens of times on my way along the A3400 but had never been in. This too proved to be a revelation with three of the four

hand pumps dispensing brews that aren't that easy to find. St Austell Tribute may be well-known, but Vale's Raven was a new one on me and Robinson's Unicorn was also unusual. I'm a fan of Otter Ales so went for Winter Warmer, which didn't disappoint.

The Black Prince is clearly a very old pub with very thick stone walls, a suit of armour and large fireplaces, and the many pump clips displayed behind the bar prove that guest ales are ever changing. It has a car park so I won't pass without stopping again, and hopefully it won't be me doing the driving.

Overall this was a very enjoyable day out, with the bonus for me of visiting three pubs I'd never been in before. I wonder who will win this year's Beer of the Festival?

**DAVE RICHARDSON**

*\*Only the legal kind, of course*



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The White Hart



Headington



# Brewing your own, big time....

**Magda Clarke** was the lucky winner of our competition to win a day's brewing, and here she describes her experience at Hook Norton

**WE WERE VERY** happy to learn that we had won the competition, and before the big day we had to scratch our heads regarding what we actually wanted to brew and what we wanted it called – Festive Fifty. After some serious thinking we decided to go for hoppy pale ale with the addition of chilli, which got the go-ahead from Rob, the head brewer.

We had to be on site by 7.45 a.m. and after a welcome chat with Mark, the marketing manager, we were then introduced to Rob who was with us throughout the day. The process started with mashing the malt, which is a hard work, and we could feel it in our muscles! After the mashing stage we had a break while the malt was standing, to release sugars. Then we went to prepare the measure of hops and as our beer is a super hoppy one, there were a lot of hops to weigh! Following that the liquid was transferred to the copper, and our job was to clean the masher, which included shovelling the spent malt out and some serious scrubbing.

The next stage was adding the hops to the liquid, in a few portions. While the hops were boiling we were given a tour of the brewery, finishing with some lovely beer tasting. After that we



**ABOVE:** Magda Clarke and Nick Clements brewing their beer at Hook Norton.

added yet more hops and at that point we finished our input with Rob taking over, transferring the liquid to the fermenting tank and adding yeast. That prepared solution transformed itself into beer after around 10 days.

We had a fantastic day and truly unforgettable experience. We learned a lot about the brewing process and it was great to take part in creating a brew. Mark, Rob and all the others were very welcoming and accommodating and we really enjoyed ourselves.

All that was left now was just to wait for the beer to be ready and after a week and a half we received the news, and the brewery guys were even kind enough to deliver the beer to

us. We have also been given our own pump clip, a great souvenir after the beer was gone. After the nervous 24-hour wait for the beer to settle we could finally try it – and we really liked it! It had lovely hoppy taste and strong chilli kick – exactly what we wanted.

Luckily we didn't have to drink all our beer at once. As we work for a charity, the Youth Hostels Association, we decided to sell some of the beer in our Oxford bar, with the profits going into supporting the YHA's mission of helping disadvantaged young people.

*To learn more about the Brew Your Own Beer experience, visit: [www.hooky.co.uk/visit-us/brew-your-own-beer.ashx](http://www.hooky.co.uk/visit-us/brew-your-own-beer.ashx)*

# The Loving of Liverpool

**Tony Goulding** recommends a few pubs in the city hosting CAMRA's AGM in April

**OUR EDITOR** Dave Richardson was keen to showcase a diverse selection of pubs he has frequented in the city of his birth, and the superb Peter Kavanagh's, an extended end terrace former beer house on the fringe of the city centre, was our first port of call.

First licensed in 1849 and refurbished as it is today in 1929 by the then landlord Peter Kavanagh, this establishment has a never ending display of wood panelling, stained-glass, hand carved wooden gargoyles and several wonderful murals including one in the front snug, a 13-foot scene from a Charles Dickens novel. A century ago this classy venue would only allow entry to white males, as women were only allowed if accompanied by gentlemen and could only sit quietly in the rear snug because Peter believed they made his pub look untidy. If they were found standing or wandering about they would be ejected no matter who they were with! This very popular centre of local culture and social life was serving Greene King Abbot along with very tasty

Cottage Christmas Cracker 4.5%, George Wright 2 Turtle Doves 4.1% (a local ale) and Peerless Santa's Sat Nav (4.8%), a spicy local ale. Phew! – what a start.

Next, in a deserted industrial setting, was a visit to the run-down former Cains and Higson's Brewery Tap, once called the Grapes. Now much fallen from glory, the atmosphere along with the beer was disappointing. A very lively landlady with lots of enthusiasm served us with Timothy Taylor Landlord and Liverpool Organic 24 Carat Gold. It would be sad to see such an imposing building including the Brewery Tap demolished, so let's hope it can be put to good use in future although there is very little life in the area since Cains closed.

Many people arriving or departing from the former Exchange railway station would have been customers of the Lion in Moorfields. It is possibly the longest continuously serving pub in the city, opening in 1842 with the

railway arriving in 1850. Refurbished several times since in a sympathetic style, the Lion is one of the city's classic boozers. The spacious main public bar retains the tiled walls and panelled counter with a beautiful etched glass backing behind, with a rear corridor drinking area with a sliding glass hatch to serve customers in the two small snugs known as the News Room and the Lounge. The News Room was originally where poor people came to read the then expensive newspapers provided free by the landlord. The tiny Lounge has a spectacular stained glass dome in the ceiling. While listening to a rock music classic, *Like a Rolling Stone* by Bob Dylan, it was noted that on the bar were Doom Bar, Young's Bitter, Salopian Lemon Dream 4.5%, Moorhouse Pride of Pendle 4.1%, Robinsons Dizzy Blonde 3.8%, Hawkshead Brodie's Pride 4.9%, George Wright the Lion Returns 4.1% (a local ale) and Bogarts Ray of Sunshine 4.2%. Regulars at the Lion included comic musician George Formby and Pete Best,



**LEFT AND ABOVE:** The interior of Peter Kavanagh's

the original Beatles drummer, who drowned his sorrows after being sacked and replaced by Ringo Starr.

We then moved on to the coastal suburb of Crosby, an easy 15-minute trip by train on the Southport line. Although not in the Good Beer Guide, the Crow's Nest (referring to the look-out on a ship's mast) was again a super drinking venue, being one of Dave's locals. Again it was lusciously furnished with much panelling, and service through a hatch to the rear parlour and small snug. A great locals' atmosphere and friendly feel were set off by paying only £3.10 for a pint of Theakston's Old Peculier, God's wonderful nectar. Also on tap were Theakston's Bitter, Deuchars IPA, Marston's New World and Caledonian Edinburgh Castle at £2.50.

I would have been happy to have looked at industrial architecture by now, but Dave had other ideas after booking us into our comfortable digs, the Royal Hotel (close to Waterloo station), which as a bonus

served a very tasty Gower Bitter, up from South Wales. A short drive took us to another of Dave's haunts, the Liverpool Pigeon micro-pub, Liverpool CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2015. On entering, the hum of conversation (no music!) hit us straightaway as this former shop holds a maximum of 50 persons. This place is superb and may represent the future, low cost to set up, and offering just the basics. But the basics included four real ales, three real ciders and up to 25 very interesting bottles along with snacks, and great to see a pub with no food. Long after greedy property developers have stolen all our pubs, these micro-pubs may be our last hope.

Around the corner from our hotel, on South Road in Waterloo, we came across the Old Bank, not a Wetherspoon (that's next door) but a very lively independent music venue. For us it was a tad noisy but it was Saturday evening, and enjoying the beers were a discerning audience in the 21 to 60 years range. On the bar were Old Speckled Hen, Slaters

Haka 4.1%, two ciders and a local brewery mystery one-off brew at 5.7%, White Label, very spicy and smoky.

A short walk from noisy South Road is an area of two-up, two-down terraced houses rather like Jericho, but with only 20% of the property value. Looming out of the Mersey mist came a former Higson's brewery now Punch pub, the Volunteer Canteen (Good Beer Guide), a splendid name with the inevitable 19th century soldier on the pub sign. The public bar was very busy with locals and a wonderful atmosphere, so we entered the parlour where we were met with a plea from the heart to sit down, as we would be served at table. We had arrived in heaven! This gem of a listed building served two Punch beers, Doom Bar and Tetley Bitter, and two guest ales, Seafarers along with a super, evening ending, Neptune brewery Abyss, a 5% black stout. On this great day's drinking the first and last pubs were my joint favourites, and even my wife stood the test. We will be back!



# Ain't life GRAND?

## Competition Result

In the last issue we asked you to identify the previous names of some well-known Oxford pubs, and the overall winner of a case of Wychwood's Christmas special ale Bah Humbug was **David Baker**.

Answers are as follows:

St Aldate's Tavern:  
**Hobgoblin, Bulldog, New Inn.**

Lighthouse:  
**Duke's Cut, Rosie O'Grady's, Queen's Arms.**

Eurobar:  
**Welsh Pony.**

White House:  
**Folly Bridge Inn.**

White Rabbit:  
**Gloucester Arms.**

Oxford Retreat:  
**Nag's Head, Antiquity Hall.**

The One:  
**Old Gatehouse, White House.**

Punter:  
**Waterman's Arms.**

James Street Tavern:  
**Red, White and Blue.**

Big Society:  
**Elm Tree, Lan Kwai Fong.**

**CAMRA'S OXFORD** branch passed a major milestone in February when it signed up its 1,000th member, who was welcomed during a presentation at the Rose and Crown in North Oxford.

The lucky person is post-graduate geology student Dave Byrne, who is studying at St Peter's and a resident of East Oxford. His father is a long-standing CAMRA member and bought him membership for Christmas.

Kentish-born Dave names his favourite real ale as Harveys of Sussex, but is also a big fan of locally brewed ales including Shotover. His favourite pubs in Oxford include the Rose and Crown, the Fir Tree in Iffley

Road and the Star in Rectory Road.

"For me, CAMRA is all about beer festivals and protecting real ale," he adds. "The pubs I like best are proper pubs that don't focus on food, and I am not a fan of the very strong and hoppy craft keg beers that are now common. I would rather socialise over a few pints of real ale."

Dave, second from right, is pictured receiving beer and gift books with, from left: Andrew and Debbie Hall, landlords of the Rose and Crown; Chris Bamford, Oxford CAMRA's membership officer; and Tony Goulding, Oxford CAMRA's outgoing chairman.



# Tony's travels

Our 'retiring' (but not shy!) chairman gets out and about, with thanks to Ray Borrett

## West Oxfordshire

The Swan at Radcot Bridge, a Greene King pub, has a new crew on board now serves up to three GK guest beers and interesting food. The Bell at Standlake is still closed following a serious fire, and with the Black Horse up for sale, this is not the best scene for the village.

Over in Stanton Harcourt, the Harcourt Arms has been closed for 12 months undergoing long-term restoration, and is now the only pub in the village. In Ducklington the Strickland Arms, a Wadworths house, is for sale and has been closed for almost 12 months. Luckily for the villagers, the Bell still serves as a locals' pub, with up to three GK beers available.

The Romany and the Morris Clown in Bampton are still serving interesting beers, with the Horseshoe temporarily closed awaiting a change of landlord. All four pubs in the village do not open till evening on weekdays.

## Witney

In Witney, the Plough has been through the wars in the last couple of years with several temporary landlords, and was

closed at the time of writing. A spirited plea has gone out from the town's drinkers to Admiral Taverns, asking somebody who knows how to run a pub to get a grip and they will then support them. Admiral will re-open the pub and is interviewing potential applicants.

## Oxford

Not one of my first choices for a beer, but the Mitre Steakhouse in High Street was found serving Sharp's Atlantic IPA, Old Hooky and Hobgoblin, all in good condition and in a pleasant ambience. During January I had become hooked on several halves of Fuller's Olivers Island and Bengal Lancer in that most comfortable of pubs, the Bear.



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### Abingdon

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

### Oxford

Britannia, Headington  
Chequers, High Street  
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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# Brewery News

## Hook Norton

Nice Try is its seasonal special, brewed for the Six Nations rugby tournament. Kick off with the perfect pint and avoid the scrum at the bar.....

## Old Bog

Oxford's only brewery expected to be back in action by March at its old premises behind the Mason's Arms in Headington Quarry. Brewer Andy Meeson is understood to have terminated his agreement to produce beer at the Old Forge brewery at Coleshill, West Oxfordshire, which is at the Radnor Arms pub. The Radnor Arms and Old Forge are for sale.

## Philsters

Philsters ales are now being produced at the Beehive Cottage brewery in Little Haseley, Oxfordshire. It uses 100% British hops, and the ales are on sale at the community-owned Plough pub at Great Haseley and at the White Rabbit in Oxford. Haseley Gold is a 4.1% Light Ale while Haseley Rising is a "very pale" ale, stronger at 4.5%. Also at 4.5% is Boosh, a Best Bitter, while Philsters plans a porter called Darkside for next winter.

## XT

The first phase of the brewery extension was completed ready for Christmas. The new annual special is XT-16 – a punchy 6% Belgian Style IPA – quadruple hopped with some of Europe's finest greenery, Belgian speciality malts and a European Union of hops all presided over by a Brussels Abbey Ale Yeast.

The Animals have been busy with

two new cask beers – Big Foot is a Noble Hopped 4.6% crisp Pale Ale, while Shark is a transatlantic Anglo-American style amber ale. Two new craft beers available in 330ml bottles and keg are The Rabbit, a 5% Motueka IPA, and OINK!, a 4.6% Red Rye Yakima.

The National Trust estate at Waddesdon Manor has commissioned an unusual beer from XT – a Quince Ale. The quince is grown on the estate and the 4.2% Quince Ale will be available exclusively in bottle from Waddesdon Manor from the spring.

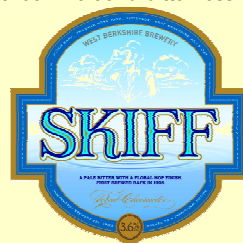
XT is working on packaging beers in cans later this year. The next brewery open day is on St George's Day – Saturday 23 April – from 10.30 a.m., with free entry and all beers costing £2 a pint.

## West Berkshire

A new rewards programme has been launched under the moniker Good Old Reward Scheme (GORS) giving publicans generous benefits and ongoing rewards for selling its flagship beer, Good Old Boy. Publicans can earn points towards a wide number of gifts such as business orientated material and glassware, plus personal rewards. Among the benefits of the scheme is the ability to redeem points for free beer; with just 10 points, publicans can choose a free cask of Good Old Boy. Simple in operation, each firkin of Good Old Boy delivered has a sticker which is removed and saved by the publican. Each sticker equates to one point and the points can be exchanged for anything from bar runners to polo shirts and other branded merchandise.

Also new is WBB's Homebrew Club. A few months ago it asked if people would be interested in attending a club for budding home brewers and the response was great, so after the arrival of the pilot plant kit it will launch the club at the brewery on Sunday 13 March, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. RSVP [clare.candy@wbbrew.com](mailto:clare.candy@wbbrew.com)

The seasonal special is Skiff (3.6%), first brewed in 1996 for the Reading Beer Festival. Light Gold in colour and gently hopped with Bramling Cross and Willamette, it has a caramel and biscuit aroma and is overlaid with light citrus and berry fruit. The finish is clean and well balanced between malt and bitterness.



## Wychwood

Dirty Tackle (4%) is the special for March as Wychwood's most popular seasonal ale makes a winning return. A full-bodied malty beer with a clean citrus aroma, it tackles your taste buds and kicks its opponents into touch! For April Jester Jack (4%) is back. A rich malt base gives a toffee and toast texture to complement a dry bitterness with a fresh fruity hop aroma.

For May, Goddess (4.1%) offers hoppy refreshment with fresh lemon and floral notes, combined with lightly kilned pale malt for a refreshing beer. Wychwood has also produced King Star craft lager at 4.8%.

# Down Memory Lane

**YET MORE MEMORIES** are being stirred by my book *Oxford Pubs*, and more contributions are welcome (see contact details at end). The latest person to write in is Phil Harvey, who now lives in Leicester but grew up at the Roebuck in Oxford, a pub right next to the Covered Market which is now Wagamama restaurant.

"My daughter bought me *Oxford Pubs* as a Christmas present, and I was quite overwhelmed to find my father mentioned in it," writes Phil. "The first 18 years of my life were spent at the Roebuck and my parents, Bill and Gertrude Harvey, died in 1967 within eight weeks of each other. Three weeks later I left the pub and Oxford to start a new life.

"Not only your piece on the Roebuck, but also your photos and descriptions of many other city pubs, brought back really strong memories. My father had been the youngest licensee in the country when, aged 21, he



took over running the pub upon the death of his mother. The Roebuck had been an occasional meeting place for the Inklings writers (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis et al), as an alternative to the Eagle and Child. I remember seeing their signatures in our guest book, which unfortunately went missing when I moved.

"Our pianist in the lounge bar was Polly Smyth, and a photo of her husband Jim is in the book when he was landlord of the Gardener's Arms in Plantation Road. She encouraged me in my piano playing and also used to let me play on occasions. And Wally Ellse (Turf Tavern) was a great friend of my Dad's.

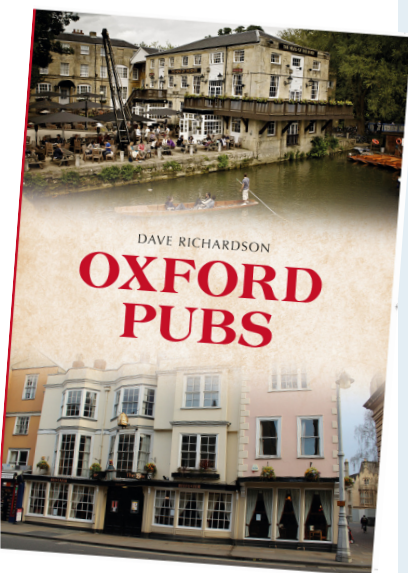
"My father was born on 12 December 1916 at the Magdalen Arms, Iffley Road. I might come back to Oxford on 12 December this year to have

a drink in his memory."

Many thanks for that, Phil. In the book I relate a story about Bill Harvey which I turned up in the *Oxford Mail* archives: "In a fascinating account of a visit to the Roebuck in 1957, the *Oxford Times* writer Stuart Mais (1885-1975) comments favourably on the Roebuck's mix of customers. Unusually for that era it had a restaurant and cocktail bar upstairs and a fairly extensive menu, but Mais comments even then that tastes were changing with fewer customers wanting a three-course sit-down lunch in a restaurant. The average time to eat a meal in Wagamama today is probably less than half an hour!

"Mais noted 'a general air of jollity' and interviewed the Roebuck's landlord, Bill Harvey, at length. Harvey is quoted as





saying: 'Here we get an exceptionally happy blend of Townsmen and Gownsmen all on the best of terms with one another, dons and dairymen, butchers and bank clerks, architects and college scouts and porters: they all come here, and what I like most about them is that nearly all these locals are regulars.'

That's exactly how a pub should be! I hope you enjoy these old photos of the Roebuck, the interior one being the bar/restaurant upstairs (courtesy of the *Oxford Mail*).

If you have memories you'd like to share, contact me at [editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk). To buy a signed copy of the book, email me or visit [www.oxfordpubhistory.co.uk](http://www.oxfordpubhistory.co.uk)

# Gone but not forgotten

Samuel Johnson was overheard on many occasions asserting that "...a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity."

My previous "Gone but not forgotten" columns have tended to concentrate on the characterful landlords and landladies of the pubs, and the pubs themselves, to the exclusion of the human felicity provided by the customers. The wit and often lugubrious humour of one's fellow tipplers was often what made visiting these pubs memorable 45 years ago. Does this scenario exist in 2016, or have the gaming machines, wall-to-wall televisions and brain-splitting, sonic hi-fi systems, invariably present for the benefit of the staff, robbed us of any attempts at conversation?

Speaking of which, two friends of mine were asked only a few years ago by a curious barmaid whether they were brother and sister, or husband and wife. When they said husband and wife, they enquired as to the reason for the question. The reply came back: "Oh, I didn't think you could be 'cos you talk to each other!"

Another husband and wife are at another pub when in walks a local television reporter, who proceeds to mount a camera on its tripod. Those of us present were assured it was all above board; we were to be interviewed and filmed for the local ITN News magazine programme.

We were asked a variety of questions. What was it we looked for when entering a

proper "local?" How often did we drink there? What was it about this local real ale that we enjoyed? Why did we chose this particular pub? What did we think of the condition of the beer and the way it was kept?

There were only about seven of us present and eventually the reporter got round to a husband and wife sitting close by me. Turning to the wife, he asked, "And why especially do you come to this pub?" There was a moment's pause. "Because my husband brings me," she replied.

Two deadpan locals haunted this same pub for some years; sadly one has now passed on, but this was typical of one of their exchanges.

*Character #1: "Going to be a good year for apples this year. Lots on the trees." Pause.*

*Character #2: "Not where I live."*

*Character #1: "Oh, where do you live? How many trees have you got?" Long pause.*

*Character #2: "I haven't got any."*

Following the death of Character #2, I frequently found myself taking his place. One day, our conversation turned to wasps and their nests. I mentioned the round papier-mache, spherical nests with a round hole in the front, through which the wasps could be seen flying in and out.

"Yes, it's truly remarkable," came the reply. "If you look carefully, you'll see some flying in and you'll see some flying out, but have you noticed, they never bump into each another?"

**DAVID HOWE**





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# The Bar Man

Oxford barman **Kriss Sprules** moved recently from the Chequers to the Crown in central Oxford



**SO.....** welcome to the first of my columns in 2016. As I write Christmas is over, Valentine's Day is done and the Six Nations is in full swing, which all adds up to my favourite time of year in this trade: springtime. Spring is about changes and just as our beer choices traditionally change from dark to light, I'm settling into making the big change from the Chequers to the Crown and it's interesting to see how the two pubs differ. As some of you know, this isn't the first time I've moved pubs (at last count, I've worked at seven (ish) in the city) but this is the first time I've ever had the chance to properly compare two pubs between the move. And since the editor has asked me to try and do that, I guess I will!

For those who might be reading this unaware, the two pubs are sisters in the Nicholson's chain but they're most definitely not twins like some chain pubs. In fact, the two (and the third "sister" in Oxford, the Eagle & Child) couldn't be more different. The Chequers has a busy, city pub feel with a large sample of the varying clientele the city has to offer. Students next to tourists next to white and blue collar workers alike

mean a constantly-changing environment with varying challenges – sometimes the bar is endlessly five-deep, sometimes there are people sat down to eat as far as the eye can see, and sometimes it's both.

The Crown runs at a very different pace; despite being the city's centremost pub, we seem to be a little off the beaten track for most people. For those who haven't found us yet, we're down the alleyway behind McDonald's (you'd be amazed how many people tell us they didn't know we were there) – and because of that, we've managed to maintain a very quaint, almost village pub-like feel to the place. Unlike the Chequers, the overwhelming majority of our guests are townies, with enough regulars that everyone seems to know everyone. It's a real throwback to my days at Far From the Madding Crowd, which were some of the best of my career. We've got a rapidly growing crowd of real ale aficionados coming through our doors, which can only be good for us in the long-term. I (obviously) would strongly encourage you to come and join them next time

you're in the city centre.

As I said, the two pubs are very different, despite being only about a couple of hundred yards apart. It's nice, though, to be able to make that change and to be part of a chain that allows us the freedom to be so different. These days, you can almost smell what chain a pub is in before you walk through the door, with so many cookie-cutter franchises out there on the high street making the most of that big sale on olive and cream paint, so it's nice to be able to change scenery without starting over.

Anyway, as usual, I'm going to sign off with some random plugs for stuff (because I can) so here's what's going on: for rugby fans, all of the Six Nations games are showing live at both the Crown and the Chequers, and we have a spring ale festival coming up that's sure to interest our local drinkers. As usual, feel free to stop in and say hello, talk about some beer or ask about the ale selection that's going to be available during the festival.

Until next time....

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# T'Ales of the Riverbank

**Dick Bosley** reports on a trip over the border ...

**THE APPROACH** of Christmas ... John's birthday ... winter solstice ... a few days of persistent rain ... how many reasons for a pub crawl do you need? A stroll along the Thames path gave us probably the most picturesque approach to Abingdon and put us in the right mood for a couple of pints.

First stop was the picturesque Nag's Head, much changed since I did all of my A-Level revision there. Then it was Ushers or Watney's Red Barrel on offer, but now we were faced with a choice of eight differing beers and a few ciders. The Liverpool Toast (Liverpool), Captain Hardy (Dorset) and Drop Kick (Edinburgh) were all very good but we felt that the Texas Hold'em, at 4.7%, was a bit strong for midday. This is one of those pubs you could stay in all afternoon, but in the interests of research we carried on to the Crown & Thistle.

This was my first visit since the change of ownership and they now have a couple of changing Marston's ales plus Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge. Not my favourites, but the 1605 was good. From here we moved on to the King's Head & Bell which again had a restricted range, this time because of festivities the previous day. Here, Gunners Gold was the better of the two Loose Cannon ales but, personally I'm not a great fan of its beers and so we moved on.

The Brewery Tap seemed to be in a winter ale mind-set with all



the beers a bit too spicy for our liking. I tried the Firecracker but by now was too 'tired' to note the brewer, I'm afraid (it's Fuller's, Dick – Ed.) Since that visit I've called in a few times and had one of my favourites – Hop Back Winter Lightning – in fantastic condition, so please don't let this report put you off a lovely pub.

Continuing westward, hoping to save 10p on our bus fare home, we called into the White Horse, a previous local of mine. As with our first and third stops we benefited from our CAMRA discount and so the Castle Rock Pale and Greene King Benjamin's were tried ... several times.

Should you have friends or relatives visiting the area I hope this will inspire you to try some of the many historic pubs in the oldest town in the country – that can easily be reached by foot or bus.

## Dates for your Diary

White Horse branch has arranged a trip to the Stroud Brewery on 9 April. The minibus will be leaving Stevenon at 10.30am, picking up then in Wantage, Faringdon and Shrivenham. Following a tour of the brewery there will be the opportunity to sample beers including a seasonal special. This will be followed by visits to the Ale House, the Prince Albert and the Golden Fleece in Stroud. The cost will be £15 per person – contact [ian.winfield@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:ian.winfield@networkrail.co.uk)

The next White Horse CAMRA branch meeting will take place at the newly-reopened Greyhound in Letcombe Regis at 7:45pm on Tuesday the 12th of April 2016. All welcome.

# Branch honours winning pubs

Oxford branch has named its Pubs of the Year for 2015. The City winner is the Lamb & Flag on St Giles, a worthy first-time recipient, and the Town & Village winner is again the Nags Head in Abingdon. Congratulations to the management and staff at both pubs for all their hard work that has led to these accolades.

## Oxford Branch Diary

**Saturday 2 April**

### Beer Festival Social

At the Brewery Tap, 40-42 Ock Street, Abingdon OX14 5BZ.  
Meet from 12 Noon

**Tuesday 5 April**

### Branch Meeting

At the Kings Head & Bell, Abingdon  
Starts at 19.30  
Regular monthly meeting with pre-meeting social at the Old Anchor Inn at St Helens Wharf from 18.45.

**Saturday 23 April**

### Beer Festival Social

At the The Nags Head on the Thames, Bridge Street, Abingdon.  
Meet from 12 Noon.

**Tuesday 3 May**

### Branch Meeting

At the Rose & Crown, North Parade Avenue, Oxford OX2 6LX  
Starts at 19.30  
Regular monthly meeting with pre-meeting social at the Gardeners Arms on Plantation Road followed by the Gardeners Arms on North Parade Avenue from 18.45.

**TOP:** Branch Secretary Steve Lawrence presents the Town & Village certificate to Dushan Salwathura of the Nag's Head  
**RIGHT:** Martin Siggery of the Lamb and Flag receives his City Pub of the Year award.





# Written in the Stars

Country pub landlord **Matt Ford** starts a regular column

Hello to all. Let me introduce myself and my pub. I'm Matt and I am the landlord of the Seven Stars Community pub in Marsh Baldon, near Oxford. I have now been here for three years and it is a privilege to be asked to write for the *Oxford Drinker*.

Real ale is one of our main focuses as a pub and as an important facet of the community, the pub needs to sell great beer. Beer needs to be fresh, inviting, interesting, newsworthy and a great accompaniment to food. We focus on a core range of well-known ales, predominantly Fuller's London Pride, as well as a continually changing line-up of local brews. Loose Cannon, White Horse, Shotover, Loddon, Two Cocks and Vale breweries all supply us with some sumptuous beers to whet locals' appetites.

Since opening up we are proud to be a member of Cask Marque as well as to be included in the Good Beer Guide for the first time in 2016. We choose our beer using some of the following criteria:

Popularity – do our drinkers like it?

Balance – does it fit in with the other beers in taste, ABV, colour?

Previous experience.

Beer also supplements our food as it is used in our batter for the fish and chips, as well as our pie of the day when it is steak and ale – we use only fresh ingredients for our food, and our British pub-style menu matches perfectly well with our range of ales. Try the fish and chips with a golden, hoppy ale like Vale's Brill Gold, or our pork belly with Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge. Heaven.....

In each issue I will be interviewing one of our locals to see why they love our beer and local beers in particular.

We are only here because the three local villages stumped up and coughed up the time and money to save their pub. Now we are serving good beer and food for everyone to pop in and love.

Hope to see you soon,  
Matt

## Local Loves Beer Interview #1



**Steve**  
Resident of Marsh Baldon.

*Been Drinking beer for 40 years – 20-odd in this pub!  
Drank mild as a young man.  
Loves local beers – tries them all on a Friday night and then goes back to his favourite.  
His perfect pint should have a good flavour, a little bit hoppy, but not too malty.  
Loves the choice of local beers on offer – competition is healthy and makes the big boys brew better beer.*



# Pub News

## Colehill

**RADNOR ARMS:** The lease is up for sale due to the ill health of the present leaseholder, and includes the Old Forge micro-brewery that occupies a building to the rear. The free house, in West Oxfordshire, is owned by the National Trust and is being advertised online on Daltons Business at a leasehold price of £80,000.

## Culham

**WAGGON & HORSES:** This free house is also being advertised on Daltons Business, at a leasehold price of £285,000.

## Kingston Lisle

**BLOWING STONE:** We understand that the pub has re-opened with temporary landlords. The Good Beer Guide entry was deleted following departure of the previous tenants, but we have no news on what beers are currently available.

## Oxford

**CHEQUERS:** This popular old High Street pub is now offering a 20% discount to CAMRA members on pints of real ale.

**CORNER HOUSE:** The pub has been saved from imminent closure and being turned into a Co-op convenience store after a spirited campaign by locals, although owner New River Retail will review the situation in two years. The Co-op recently signed an agreement with CAMRA on “development principles”, meaning it will seek planning permission for conversions.

**FAIRVIEW:** Despite being closed for about three years, it is being advertised on Daltons Business at a leasehold price of £20,000.

**GEORGE STREET SOCIAL:** This is the name of a new bar and former cafe on the corner of New Inn Hall Street. Food is served downstairs and drinks upstairs, including some craft kegs but no real ale as yet.

**HARRY'S:** The former Corridor cocktail bar on Cowley Road has re-opened with six real ale pumps, serving Sharp's and Shotover beers on a recent visit (see Cowley Road Crawl, on page 6). The Harry is Harry Campbell, an experienced pub manager, assisted by Aidan Strong – both having previously worked at the Eagle and Child. Aidan said Harry's wanted to “appeal to everyone” and it has an eclectic menu with delicacies such as black pudding fritter and four types of sausage.

**HOLLYBUSH:** Buyers are lining up for this closed pub on Osney Island, West Oxford, if the private owner wishes to sell, with a guide price of at least £750,000. Local councillor Susanna Pressel has mobilised support for re-opening the Hollybush as a pub, and Oxford couple Simone and Nick Jones have offered to buy it, according to the *Oxford Mail*. Interest has also been expressed by Dodo Pub Co, the company leasing the Rusty Bicycle and Rickety Press from Arkell's Brewery.

**KITE:** This West Oxford pub has been revived by new tenants of Greene King, who have an agreement to sell a range of XT ales. XT will now be brewing a

range of house beers for the Kite, to sell alongside its GK offerings.

**ROYAL BLENHEIM:** Landlord Chris Davies left the Blenheim at the end of February to become Chief Steward of Wadham College. His assistant Dan Pennington is currently looking after the pub until a new manager is appointed.

**UNIVERSITY CLUB:** The next “bucket night” at the club, which welcomes CAMRA members, is on Friday 11 March with an American theme, showcasing bottled ales such as Victory Brewing with four bottles for £11. The ever-changing range of cask ales at the bar has included recent choices Cloudwater Brewing; Mad Goose and Ubu from Purity; strong Windle Pale Ale from Thornbridge; Proteus from Siren Craft; and Saltaire.

## South Hinksey

**GENERAL ELIOTT:** This village pub, one of the success stories of 2015, was closed at the time of writing – even for Sunday lunch which used to be its busiest time. It is being advertised on Daltons Business for £795,000 freehold. The GE is said to make an annual profit of £130,000 and has several guest rooms as well as bar and restaurant, a runner-up in the Oxfordshire Restaurant Awards. Helen and Cass Hazlewood re-opened the pub after many years of closure in November 2014, installing a range of mainly Vale Brewery cask ales. Special events have included well attended beer festivals and live bands in summer, and it can only be hoped that their good work continues under new ownership.



## Watchfield

**EAGLE:** The only pub left in this historic Oxfordshire village (following closure of the Royal Oak many years ago), is the Eagle is run by Lisa and Mark Glass (pictured with their staff) who took over the pub last October. Lisa has worked for the previous two landlords so when the tenancy came up from Admiral Taverns, she was best placed to take over.

The pub has always been known as the Eagle and has a long history. Prior to being converted to a pub 120 years ago, it was a mill with a bakery next door. There are three real ales available, usually including one from a small brewery like Prescott. The pub is dog- and child-friendly and welcomes CAMRA members.

## Wheatley

**RAILWAY HOTEL:** The pub, which included a Thai restaurant, was closed at the time of writing but it is understood that Fuller's plans to install a new tenant.

**SUN INN:** This pub is being advertised for sale on Daltons Business and is thought to be a target for developers. Freehold price is £295,000.

## Wolvercote

**WHITE HART:** The future of this pub is uncertain once again as the private individual who owns it wants to turn it into a private house and build on the car park. It remains open, the lease having been acquired by a community association a few years ago. The pub is next door to gastro-pub Jacob's Inn, but has aimed for a pub rather than restaurant atmosphere. CAMRA has applied for the White Hart to be listed as an Asset of Community Value, giving interested parties six months to raise the money to keep it as a pub.



# The Nag's Head



on the Thames



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# Q and A Pete Flynn

Oxford CAMRA's new Chairman-elect

*Tell us a bit about yourself, please, Pete?*

I am originally from Feltham, south-west London, and am now retired having spent all my working life in financial services. I have lived in Abingdon since 1984 and am married to Helen, with a son and daughter in higher education.

*How did you get involved with CAMRA?*

My late father, Bernard, was a founding member of the Richmond and Hounslow branch and introduced me to CAMRA in 1975. I am not exaggerating in saying that tasting real ale for the first time was a life changing experience, and I have enjoyed many happy occasions meeting like-minded individuals.

It is only since retirement that I have become an active member of CAMRA, attending monthly branch meetings, helping at the annual Oxford Beer Festival, and supporting social events. It's all about having fun whilst enjoying real ale, which is no different to when I went along to my inaugural branch meeting. The only difference is we now have over 1,500 breweries offering myriad styles of beer, and this success is attributable to CAMRA and its 175,000 members.

We are always on the lookout for new members, and you will find a warm welcome awaits those of you who would like to attend our monthly meetings or branch socials.

*What are your favourite beers, and, have you tried different styles recently?*

My favourites are those dark and nourishing types – typically stouts, milds and porters – and I also like IPAs. Loose Cannon Porter, West Berkshire's Maggs Magnificent Mild and Loddon's Forbury Lion IPA are among those I have tried recently.

*What are your favourite pubs and styles of pub?*

My favourite pubs include the Brewery Tap, Abingdon; St Aldate's Tavern, Oxford; and the Masons Arms, Headington. I like pubs that really make an effort to excel and delight customers. The styles of pub I like are varied. We are now seeing a proliferation of café-style pubs where you can order a coffee as easily as a pint of real ale, and an example of this is the Chester in East Oxford. My favourites are pubs where the atmosphere is timeless, and you might just as well be enjoying your pint in the 1950s or 1960s. Examples include the Lamb and Flag, White Horse and the King's Arms in Oxford.



*What are your plans for getting branch members more involved?*

Everyone has a role to play, and many of our members would already have attended meetings, helped at beer festivals, and visited the annual Great British Beer Festival in London. But there is a certain amount of complacency among members who see all the work being done and think "that's ok then". It is debatable whether we need a profound influx of new members, but one way of achieving this would be if everyone were to introduce a friend to a branch meeting at some point during the year. I feel we should each do our bit for real ale in any way we can.

*What would you like to see happen in the local pubs scene?*

I would like to see an increase in the number of community-owned pubs such as the Seven Stars at Marsh Baldon, which are a relatively new phenomenon. Freeing the pub from a brewery tie provides greater choice of real ale, and the support of the local community becomes self-fulfilling in terms of its success. I am also a big fan of small pub groups, or individual entrepreneurs taking on a failing pub and turning it around.

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