



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Issue 87
December 2014 - January 2015

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the Oxford Drinker



We wish our readers and advertisers a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year

The free newsletter of the **Oxford** and **White Horse** Branches of CAMRA
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The Nag's Head

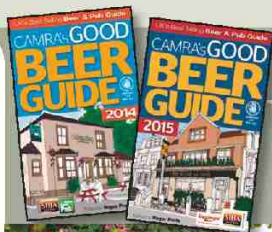
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THURSDAY

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*Club members only – ask at the bar for a sign-up form for
The Nag's Island Ale and Wine Club

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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.

This newsletter is also available to download in pdf format from our website oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker

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Please send contributions to the editor at the above email address.

Pub news can be sent to
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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 best things in life are three

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Welcome

...a battle for the future of thousands of pubs is under way

HOWLS of protest from the big pub-owning companies soon erupted after Parliament voted to abolish the "beer tie" that means most leased and tenanted pubs can only buy beer from the companies that own them – often at inflated prices. CAMRA had campaigned for years to achieve this but the vote still came as a surprise, with cross-party support winning the day by 284 votes to 269.

The Small Business Bill – of which this is part – still has to pass through the House of Lords before this becomes law, and needs to clear Parliament before the General Election in May. So it may be too early to celebrate – and as our guest columnist Stuart Bull points out, it could make life even more competitive for hard-pressed landlords (see page 20).

The bill – which also sets up the right for a rent review every five years and creates a pubs watchdog – was supported by CAMRA because the beer tie means we are paying up to 60p per pint more than the market rate, contributing to pub closures running at about 30 per week. More than £350 million was wiped off the share value of pubcos and large

breweries after the vote on 18 November, as they warned of dire consequences.

A squeeze on their profits would mean they decide to sell off thousands more pubs, with the Government's own research indicating that 1,400 could close with 7,000 job losses. If that happens, who would take them on? Some would be successfully re-opened by entrepreneurs or community buy-outs, but others would be lost forever.

The move only affects companies owning 500 or more pubs – the likes of Enterprise Inns, Punch Taverns and Greene King – but tied pubs make up 48% of all pubs in the UK. Smaller brewers are exempt but some of them also over-charge their tenants, another bone of contention before the bill passes into law.

There's news of more pub closures in this edition, but also

signs of hope. Following on from re-opening of the Chester in Chester Street, Oxford in October – doing a fine job selling mainly local Loose Cannon ales – comes re-opening of the General Elliott in South Hinksey. The derelict shell has been transformed by new owners from the village and anyone who cares about community pubs should give these ventures their support. At least three community buy-out bids are also under way as you can read on the following pages.

As we prepare for the festive season and pubs stoke up their real fires, we should look ahead and consider an action plan for any pub that might be sold off by the big pubcos. There's lots of free advice available and in many places – such as South Hinksey – there is no other business left in a village except the pub.

As the winter turns colder, could I make one personal plea to landlords? Raise the temperature of your real ale a little, as well into November I was being served really cold pints that deaden the flavour. It was a warm autumn, I know – but now winter's here for sure!

DAVE RICHARDSON

**NO TO PUBCO
GREED**

YES TO Pubs



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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.

A “mini” tour of Cowley

Dave Richardson seeks out real ale in and around the most densely populated part of Oxford

WHILE there's a good choice of real ale nearer the city end of Cowley Road, when you get into Cowley itself it doesn't look so promising. The area was memorably described as a “real ale desert” in CAMRA's Oxford Pub Guide of 2011, and since then further pub closures have reduced the choice further. The most recent casualty is Punch Taverns' Nuffield Arms in Littlemore Road, following on from closure of the Nelson by the Cowley Centre – a pub with a bad reputation towards the end – last summer. However, Greene King's Hungry Horse chain – purveyor of the 1,996-calorie Double Donut Burger – is planning to open in the John Allen retail park.

Corner House

I started a tour of the area not in Cowley itself but on the edge of Wood Farm, where the imposing Marston's-owned Corner House stands at the junction of Hollow Way and The

Slade. It has two large bars and three hand pumps selling beers from the Marston's range, which on this occasion were Banks's Bitter, Pedigree and Hobbogoblin, with plans to install a fourth hand pump in the lounge for a guest ale. The Banks's slipped down well as landlady Jan Walker told me it was “an old-fashioned boozier” with no food but music, games, Sky TV, darts and Aunt Sally. Prices are old-fashioned too and must be among the cheapest in Oxford, at £2.59 for a pint of Banks's, £2.74 for Pedigree and £2.79 for Hobbogoblin. Long may it continue!

Fairview Inn

There seems no likelihood of this estate pub in the Lye Valley re-opening, and internal changes mean it is no longer on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. It dates from 1959 but had been largely unchanged since then, until put up for sale by Enterprise Inns

and closed in March. The “To Let” sign was still up but regulars now use the Corner House.

Prince of Wales

Coming into Cowley itself our first stop was this 1930s-built pub on Horspath Road, where the only real ale on offer was Greene King IPA. A very large pub with a sprawling back room used for functions, it finds little demand for our favourite tippale with a second hand pump unused. It's a popular sports pub, and people who remember Oxford's Morrells brewery will be pleased to see the sign “Morrells Traditional Oxford Ales” still extant behind the bar.

Cricketer's Arms

Things looked up as we moved on to this large pub on Temple Cowley Road, which boasts a great view of Oxford's spires from the garden. It's yet another Greene King pub and landlord



TOP LEFT: The Corner House
TOP RIGHT: Jan Walker and Stewart Robertson at the Corner House
RIGHT: The empty Nuffield Arms
LEFT: Stephen Dean at The Cricketers



Stephen Dean was celebrating Cask Marque accreditation, and along with the IPA was selling Fireside, a dark, malty winter warmer beer at 4.5% which went down very well. Guest ales are also available with Brains' Reverend James on the way, while recent brews have also included Trawlerboys from Green Jack brewery in Lowestoft. It's a big, busy pub with darts, music and pool, and we wish Stephen well as he embarks on a new six-year tenancy agreement.

Original Swan

This large pub on the corner of Oxford Road and Between Towns Road dates from 1854 and is so-called because there was a second pub called the Swan in Cowley at that time – hence the change of name in 1880. It's one of only three Oxford pubs owned by Swindon brewery Arkell's, but alas the real ale pumps advertising HB and Kingdown are unused, as

is the large lounge except for regular special events. But landlord Patrick Fox gave us a warm welcome, offering bottled beers including Moonlight (4.5%) and a very tasty Master's stout. This is a lager-based pub with TV, snooker and pub games, and Patrick knows his business well as he comes from a long family tradition of running pubs. He was brought up at the Black Boy in Headington as his grandfather Lee Jackson ran various pubs over 50 years including this, the Fir Tree in Ifley Road, the Eagle Tavern (now the Rusty Bicycle) in Magdalen Road and the Friar Bacon in Cutteslowe, which is long gone, retiring about 1990. One of Patrick's prize possessions in Lee's ornate snuff box, truly a relic of another era.

William Morris

Further along Between Towns Road adjacent to the Cowley

Centre is Wetherspoon's first pub in Oxford, dating from 2003. It's a large, gloomy pub with little natural light, which I found the most unappealing of all the Wetherspoon pubs I have been in. It wasn't particularly busy on this Thursday night, but only two bar staff were on duty and it was a struggle to get served. The choice of real ale is however the best in Cowley and I had my first encounter with Dark Blue University Ale from White Horse (Wayland Smithy was also on), a dark and nutty beer named after the rowing team's colours. It cost £1.70 a pint with my CAMRA discount voucher – half what you'd pay for most real ales in Oxford. Seven of the 10 hand pumps were in use but otherwise the choice was uninspiring with two selling "house ale" Ruddles Best, and others selling Doom Bar and Fuller's London Pride. New Zealand's Low Blow IPA came from Wetherspoon's international range, but I was



ABOVE: The Marsh Harrier

keen to move on.

Marsh Harrier

This is the "oasis in a real ale desert" according to the Oxford Pub Guide, a Fuller's house just off the far end of Cowley Road which immediately feels warm and welcoming as you go in. This is a genuine character pub and would certainly be my local if I lived in the area, although I paid more for a half (£1.90) than a pint at Wetherspoon. This was for a very tasty glass of Fire Cracker (4.8%), using mulled spices and cinnamon for a real winter treat and brewed by Fuller's under the Gales name. Red Fox, described as a red autumn ale, was also available, along with London Pride and Seafarers. The pub can choose two guest ales a month from Fuller's range, and tonight it was offering Liberation Ale from Jersey which I'll have to try another time. The Marsh Harrier is very much a locals' pub but in

no way spit and sawdust – the menu is quite up-market, and there's regular live music.

So where would I go back?

In an ideal world we should support all pubs or there will be more closures, often leading to demolition or becoming houses or flats. We hear that the Nuffield might become a supermarket or funeral parlour, and that the Nelson might become a McDonalds. More exotic uses might also be found, as with the former Exeter Hall just a couple of minutes from the Marsh Harrier which became first a curry house and is now a Muslim study centre and future mosque called Ahlul Bayt. Cowley will never be a real ale hot spot, but the Marsh Harrier would be my top choice – and the Corner House for a cheap pint in a real pub atmosphere.

DAVE RICHARDSON

Trinity is best in County

A regular feature of the Oxford Beer Festival is the Beer Tasting session on the Friday lunchtime. Due to the large number of breweries that qualify as "LocAle" to Oxford, we changed the competition this year to feature only breweries from Oxfordshire, and our new award, the "Champion Beer of Oxfordshire" was born!

An elite panel of judges gathered on the stage of the Town Hall on Friday lunchtime for the blind tasting. Amongst the judges were a number of brewers and licensees, as well as members of CAMRA, the Brookes Real Ale Society (BRAS) and Oxford University Real Ale Society (OURAS). The judges were split into three groups to between them judge sixteen beers from sixteen different breweries. Each group put its top two forward to the final, and after much deliberation, the tasting panel decided upon a winner.

The result of the competition was as follows:

First Place
Shotover Trinity

Second Place
Brakspear Oxford Gold

Third Place
Loose Cannon India Pale Ale

So congratulations to owner Ed Murray and head brewer Josh Walker of Shotover Brewery on their success. We hope to have a photograph of the presentation to Ed and Josh in the next issue.

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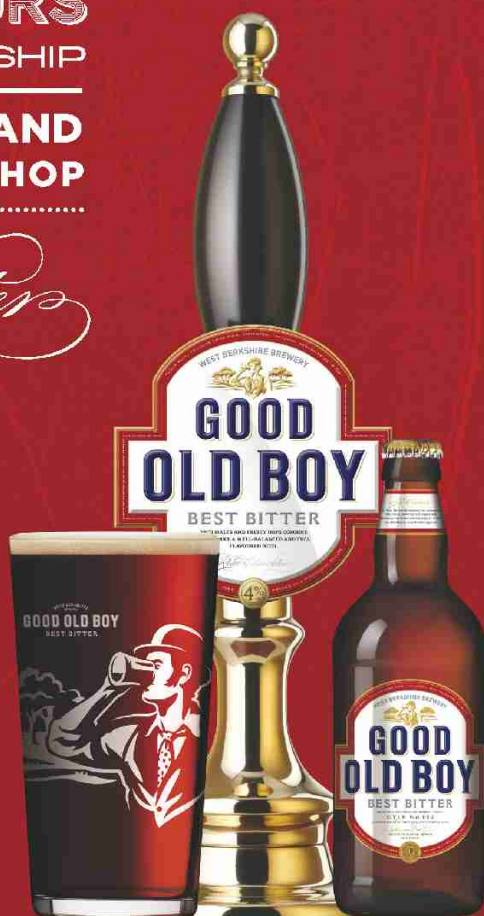
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Way out WestPart 1

Tony Goulding describes a branch minibus trip to rural West Oxfordshire

AT THIS time of year the branch is considering potential entries for the 2016 Good Beer Guide, looking at pubs that have served beer in consistently top condition by bar people who are knowledgeable and friendly, and also sympathetic to CAMRA's aims. We have about 120 country pubs in our branch, some hardly accessible by public transport, and in an ideal world we would love our local members to keep an eye on one pub each and keep us up to date with details.

Mini-bus survey trips are a way of reaching some of them and have been running for many years, and a recent trip to the "Wild West" saw a small party of nine arrive at The Talbot near Eynsham to find 3B and Kingsdown in good order at this Arkell's-owned pub a few yards from the Thames at Swinford toll bridge. A recent change of management should see a continuation of the friendly ambiance with good food served and classic accommodation available.

There used to be three pubs in the village of Brize Norton, but the Carpenters Arms near the end of the airfield runway closed more than 20 years ago and is now a Bed and Breakfast, only recently losing its impressive "Morland Artist" tiled signage. The pub was a homely old local and a 1980 pub guide notes that "the landlord squirts the Morlands with a style of his own". A few yards further on is another former Morland house, The Chequers, now run by Greene King as a food pub serving up to three beers from its usual range.

It's always a pleasure to visit The Mason's Arms, a former Bass-Charrington house on the northern fringe of the village. Locals and visitors alike come to this free house for very good pub grub and traditional pub games, and there's a not-so-large TV in the lower bar area. Of course the beer is most important, and on the day in good condition were Cottage Medusa, the ubiquitous Sharp's Doom Bar and Ringwood Best.

As you approach the entrance to The Plough at Kelmscot, a free house for many years, the tiled Morland Artist sign beams out at you and you hope for a treat. Top quality food is to the fore with a roaring fire for the cold winter to come in this rambling old 16th century inn. Two beers were both in fine form, Wye Valley Golden Ale and St Austell Tribute.

A short run through the narrow lanes turned up another "last in the village" pub, The Bell at Langford, a former Halls pub that's now a free house. The Crown, almost opposite the church (which has some of the country's most important Saxon remains) closed nearly 20 years ago. A change of ownership at The Bell over a year ago has seen the very popular high quality food continue, but with the addition of a bar area for drinkers and good value bar snacks. There's something for everyone and it is helping the community get together. The Bell was formed from two 17th century farmworkers' cottages and it really does feel historic.



RIGHT: The pub crawlers in the Clanfield Tavern

On offer were Otter Brewery's Poppy, a special ale for remembering the fallen, and also from the West Country were Sharp's Atlantic and Wickwar Bankers Draft, plus our more local Hooky.

A 10-minute journey found us in Clanfield, where the Plough Hotel – a superb 16th century manor house – looms amongst the greenery. Wadworth 6X was found here by one of the party and is regularly available, but the Clanfield Tavern was the main purpose of our visit. Until the arrival of the present management a year ago it had been down a little, but we were in for a surprise as a beer festival was under way with 12 to choose from plus Brakspear bitter on the bar. This is a spacious food house with a light and airy conservatory which is now owned by Marston's and usually has three or four beers including a guest. Beers for the festival were from Batemans, Wadworth, Camerons, Oakham, Theakston, Okells, Adnams, Hook Norton, Black Sheep, Everards, Holts and Purity,

most of which were sampled and found to be in good condition. The novelty of this festival was that you paid in advance and then helped yourself, and the more beer you bought, the cheaper – most trusting of the customers.

On we went to Bampton, to find that Morris Clown landlord Steve was away but the beer was as ever in top form with White Horse Bitter, West Berkshire Mr Chubb's Lunchtime Bitter and a super North Cotswold Hung Draw'n and Portered. Some of the party visited The Horseshoes, a former Morland house now run by Greene King which has recently changed management, and found the Timothy Taylor Landlord and Morland Original to be in good order with the pub being busy with rugby on TV. Good pub grub is served lunchtimes and early evenings.

The Romany, once an Ushers house then a free house, used to be Bampton's jewel in the crown. In recent times it seems to have fallen a little, but on this

visit it had improved with real ale sales increasing and up to three ales on the bar including Tring Brewery's Side Pocket for a Toad and a nameless Winter Solstice, both in good condition along with good pub food.

It was stated that the best pub would be the last, so off we went to The Red Lion at Northmoor. Well to those who had not visited what a surprise, as it has been transformed since bought from Greene King as a superb community-owned pub, passionately managed and serving top quality food in comfortable pub surroundings. Drinkers are well cared for with up four beers to choose from, and on the day these were Brakspear Bitter, Ramsbury Gold, Loose Cannon Abingdon Bridge and Cotswold Cask.

What a super day, and I was back home by 7.15pm. If you want to join us the next minibus trip is to Otmoor and around the eastern side of Oxford on 13 December. For contact details see the branch diary in this issue.

Way out WestPart 2

Dave Richardson visits some villages in West Oxfordshire which real ale drinkers may not have discovered

ON THE B4449 road a couple of miles east of Bampton, the Red Lion at Aston is owned by Enterprise Inns which apparently hoped to sell the property, but with no prospect of it being approved for conversion to a house. So Aston hopes to hang on to the last pub in the village, and landlord Stuart Woodhall – who took over in June after it had been closed for six months – is determined to make a go of it. He and his business partner have also just taken over the Black Horse at East Hanney, near Wantage.

Two hand pumps are available at the Red Lion and unusually there is no regular brew but ever-changing guest ales supplied by Enterprise with Wainwright, Betty Stogs, Sharp's Doom Bar and Deuchars IPA among recent choices. The one pump operating during my visit (two at weekends) was dispensing a famous name from the past – Tetley's Bitter – from Northampton according to the

pump clip, but brewed on behalf of owner Carlsberg by Banks's in Wolverhampton, according to the Good Beer Guide. It tasted nothing like the Tetley's of old, but much better than the bland canned stuff turned out by Carlsberg using the Tetley name.

This is a pleasant, stone-built, two-roomed pub with one room acting as a restaurant serving an inventive menu, with seasonal specials such as game hotpot and wild boar stew. Let's wish Stuart luck and give him every support.

Just off the B4020 road north of Clanfield, the Vines at Black Bourton is an up-market restaurant (capacity 75) and boutique hotel (with 18 guest rooms) that also fulfils its traditional role as a village pub, having previously been called the Horse and Groom, with plenty of space for drinkers away from the dining area. It serves only Hook Norton ales with Hooky and/or Old Hooky

always available, plus seasonal ales such as Twelve Days at this time of year. A major refurbishment will start in January but the bar area, with log burner and TV, will remain unchanged. Proprietor Ahdy Gerges knows a thing or two about the hospitality industry having spent many years with Hilton, and offers dinner, bed and breakfast packages from £145 for a couple.

Alvescot is a small village on the B4020 road north of Clanfield and is home to a large Wadworth pub, the Plough, which has two claims to fame. It's not only one of very few pubs around Oxford with a full-length indoor skittle alley, but has one of the youngest landladies in the business, 22-year-old Verity Perkins. She has worked here for over four years and took over one year ago after the previous landlord left after only six months. Before that, the couple running the pub had built up a good business over 13 years.



ABOVE: The Plough at Alvescot

Now the Plough is returning to stability and building up its food sales, with the skittle alley popular for parties and functions especially in the run-up to Christmas. The pub is large enough to keep skittle parties well away from the lounge/restaurant area, with three hand pumps in each bar dispensing the usual Wadworth range including, on this occasion, Henry's IPA and 6X. The pub's ample wall space is decorated by photographs and prints by local people, most being for sale.

I must admit I have seen the brown sign on the A40 pointing towards the Boot Inn at Barnard Gate many times, but never before turned off the Witney to Eynsham trunk road to take a look at it. This is a pub I would definitely consider returning to for a meal, and although the choice of real ale is limited with two hand pumps but only one in use on this occasion, at least it turned up something interesting. This was Maple Moon, from

Manchester brewery Joseph Holt, which slipped down very well and comes from a family firm in continuous operation since 1849.

Formerly named the Britannia, this large pub was renamed the Boot Inn in the 1980s and has on display dozens of boots and shoes donated in aid of charity by sportsmen and celebrities including Gary Lineker, Sir Stanley Matthews, Jeremy Clarkson, Raymond Blanc and Prue Leith.

The Boot Inn's Australian manager, Zac Kearney, says there are no more than about 20 households in Barnard Gate but the pub acts as their local as well as being a dining destination for miles around. Special events include steak nights on Wednesdays, starting at £25 for two rump steaks and a bottle of wine.

DAVE RICHARDSON

Oxford Branch Diary

Saturday 13 December

Minibus Trip

To survey some of the country pubs. To book a seat contact Tony Goulding (see contacts below)

Monday 5 January

Branch Meeting

University Club, Mansfield Road
18.30 White Horse, Broad St.
19.00 Turf Tavern
19.30 University Club
Regular monthly meeting. All welcome.

Saturday 24 January

Branch Social

Meet at 1pm
Rose and Crown Beer Festival, Charlbury. Take the train or the S3 bus from Oxford, or the X9 from Witney.

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Grahame Allen
treasurer@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Vice-Chair and Chairman of the Pubs Group

Dennis Brown
vice-chair@oxfordcamra.org.uk



White Horse Branch News

contact@whitehorsecamra.org.uk www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

Not the Wantage Beer Festival

THE "Not the Wantage Beer Festival" was held in response to the decision by the new management at Wantage Civic Hall, now named The Beacon, not to allow outside organisations to sell food and drink on the premises. The White Horse branch of CAMRA was therefore unable to host the Wantage Beer Festival, which had been running successfully in the town for the past five years.

The event was organised by Peter Fowler from the Shoulder of Mutton, with support from Paul Hexter at the Royal Oak, and an army of volunteers who helped serve during the three-day event. It featured many beers brewed especially for the occasion, and was held on three separate sites: a marquee erected at Challow Park Studios, in the north of the town, thanks to the generosity of Amy Blythe and Will Biggs; the Royal Oak Inn; and the Shoulder of Mutton.

The Challow Park Studios site had 30 beers available, plus ciders and perry, together with a hog-roast. A shuttle service ran

drinkers from the Shoulder of Mutton to the site. The Royal Oak featured 22 beers, with extra stillage set up in the lounge, and an amazing array of ciders. The Shoulder of Mutton had 12 beers on stillage in the Function Room plus at least 10 beers available at the bar. Vegetarian snacks were available throughout the day. There was no entry charge to the festival and beer prices were kept to a minimum.

The event was a great success, with both the Royal Oak and the Shoulder of Mutton reporting record sales, and the Challow Studios site also proved popular, where there was an excellent range of beers which were in superb condition throughout.

Thanks to Peter, Paul and all the many helpers for keeping real ale flourishing in Wantage. The White Horse Branch still hopes to hold a festival at a new site in March next year, so watch this space. We await with interest the results of the Beacon's Oktoberfest.

Saving our Pubs

VALE of White Horse District Council has now registered The Hare in West Hendred as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), allowing the group of villagers who are trying to buy the pub six weeks to notify the owners, Greene King, of their intention to place an offer. This would then grant them a further six months for the necessary funds to be raised. The pub is currently closed but villagers are confident of a successful



outcome to their bid and hope that The Hare could re-open as a community pub, free of ties, in early 2015. However, there is a lot of work still to be done and fundraising is the main focus of activity. Shares are still available. For more information, go to www.SavetheHare.co.uk, Twitter: Savethehare or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/savetheHare.

The Plough in West Hanney was due to close by the end of November, but this isn't the end of the story. It may seem that the Save The Plough campaign has gone quiet, but there has

Beer Festival Diary

been a huge amount of activity behind the scenes. There has been some confusion over the future of the pub: first it was on the market, then it was off. The Save The Plough committee is in dialogue direct with Punch Taverns seeking to negotiate the purchase of the freehold. Thanks to the support it has had from the villagers, it believes it now has the financial backing required and is working on the best way to structure the purchase of the freehold to ensure the best level of investment and community involvement. If successful it would find a tenant to run The Plough. The results of the recent survey will be used to help any new tenant in running the pub to attract the most support from the village. The survey is still ongoing so if you haven't done so already do please contribute your ideas at www.savetheplough.org.



Steventon Parish Council is in the process of registering the North Star, as there was word (yet again) that it was to be sold. However, we have now heard that a new tenant will start in December instead.

Further details of festivals can be found on the Oxford CAMRA website www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/festivals.php

Tuesday 9 - Saturday 13 December Winter Ale Festival

Far from the Madding Crowd, Friars Entry, Oxford
01865 240900
www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

Saturday 13 December (12 noon - 5pm) Haddenham Winterfest

Banks Park, Banks Road, Haddenham
24 beers plus cider
www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk

Friday 23 - Sunday 25 January Rose & Crown Winter Beer Festival

The Rose & Crown, Market Street, Charlbury
20 beers plus cider & perry
01608 810103
www.roseandcrown.charlbury.com

Friday 30 - Saturday 31 January Salisbury Winterfest

British Legion Club, Endless Street, Salisbury (new venue)
21 beers plus 2 ciders
www.salisburycamra.org.uk

Wednesday 11 - Saturday 14 February CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival

The Roundhouse, Roundhouse Road, Pride Park, Derby
Includes 'Champion Winter Beer of Britain Competition'
www.nwaf.org.uk

Friday 20 - Sunday 22 February Littleworth Original Beer & Sausage Festival

Cricketers Arms, Littleworth, nr Wheatley
01865 872738
www.cricketers-arms.co.uk

Friday 27 - Saturday 28 February Merton Beer Festival

Merton Village Hall, Islip Road, Merton, nr Bicester
20+ beers, ciders & perries

Thursday 7 - Saturday 9 May Banbury Beer Festival

TA Centre, Oxford Road, Banbury
100 beers & ciders. Food available, plus live music on Friday and Saturday. The featured area for 2015 is Wales, many of the beers will be sourced from this region.
www.northoxoncamra.org.uk

Pub News

Abingdon

CROSS KEYS: The Ock Street pub has finally called last orders having been put up for sale, with permission secured for conversion into six flats.

SAXTON ARMS: This estate pub was also closed at the time of writing. Like the Cross Keys, it was one of 275 "non-core" pubs sold by Greene King to Hawthorn Leisure, which has now put in a planning application to extend the pub to include new seating and dining areas. Perhaps better times are coming, unlike for the Cross Keys.

WHITE HORSE: Well placed to benefit from closure of the Cross Keys, this Greene King pub further out of town up Ock Street plans to introduce a 10% discount for CAMRA members although this was not yet operational as we closed for press. It offers one of the widest choices of real ales in Abingdon with nine hand pumps, and although all guest ales are supplied by Greene King, the range of beers is usually impressive. The regulars are IPA and Morlands Original, joined by its seasonal beer Fireside (4.5%) and Abbot Reserve (6.5% – !) on a recent visit. Also available were Skinner's Cornish Knocker (4.5%), the very dark Colonel's Whiskers by Batemans (4.3%), 6X (4.1%) from Wadworth, Timothy Taylor's Landlord (4.3%) and Autumn Stout (5%) – one of GK's "collaboration brews", from St Peter's Brewery in Suffolk. Only the Nag's Head and Wetherspoon's The Narrows can rival that many hand pumps in Abingdon, so the White Horse is worth checking out.



Binsey

PERCH: This much loved thatched pub by the Thames, in a village reachable by car only from Oxford's Botley Road, is due to close in early January for a major refurbishment lasting for around 12 weeks.

Littleworth

CRICKETER'S ARMS: Landlord Stuart Bull wishes to sell the pub in the medium term, but hopes of a community buy-out have so far proved unfounded.

New Yatt

SADDLER'S: A community buy-out of this village pub near Witney, which has been closed for about three years, has been mounted – but according to the *Oxford Mail*, villagers are divided over whether it should re-open. Businessman Graham Shelton, who led the successful community buy-out of the Red Lion in Northmoor, said: "We have been advising them,

and also the people hoping to buy The Hare in West Hendred. Theirs is a tougher ask than ours because they are going into a private negotiation with someone who doesn't want to sell except at a profit, whereas we went to Greene King who definitely did want to get the Red Lion off their books."

Oxford

HONEYPOT: This pub in Hollybush Row, near Oxford railway station, was closed for refurbishment in November but was due to re-open shortly under a new tenant.

LIGHTHOUSE: This is the new name for the Duke's Cut, and is the fourth reincarnation in less than 20 years for the pub in Park End Street at the corner of the Worcester Street car park. Historically known as the Queen's Arms and as Irish-themed Rosie O'Grady's from 1995, it became the Duke's Cut in 2009 being named after a channel linking the Thames with the Oxford Canal.

The car park was formerly the canal basin, and the new owners of the Lighthouse have restored the pub with a historical yet contemporary feel including many pictures of the old canal and various ships. According to their own research the pub was also called the Navigation's End in the early 19th century, "an inland beacon and tavern for the navigators of the Oxford Canal". Mood lighting can also transform the interior – another reason to call it the Lighthouse. The pub re-opened in October and is under the same management as the Cowley Retreat in Cowley Road, and beers are supplied by Marston's with Oxford Gold and Hobgoblin usually available. A full menu will be launched in January.



South Hinksey

GENERAL ELLIOTT: Once Oxford CAMRA's Pub of the Year but closed since Christmas 2008 after the previous landlord left abruptly, the pub re-opened on 28 November in time for the festive season. Acquired by villagers Cass and Helen Hazlewood from Vale Brewery of Brill, Buckinghamshire, it is



serving mainly Vale beers including Best Bitter, Gravitas and Wychert, plus regular guest ales likely to include White Horse's Village Idiot. Bar snacks and fine food are available, and the pub has a large garden which used to be popular in summer. Despite having no public transport, the village is easily reached from Abingdon Road in Oxford by going down Lake Street, over a railway bridge and along a paved but unlit path – a walk of about 15 minutes. "We were once CAMRA pub of the year and we will do everything to make sure we are again," said Helen. "The pub had been terribly vandalised, with all the electrics and copper piping ripped out, no longer even part of the mains, so everything had to be reconnected. The kitchen had to be closed off entirely and a new kitchen even part of an outbuilding to the side of the property."

If you have any pub news, please send it too
pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Witney

PLOUGH: New tenants arrived in this Admiral Taverns pub in November, which has a large riverside garden making it a popular spot in good weather. Four hand pumps are available with Sharp's Doom Bar being the best seller, and Fuller's London Pride and Wychwood's Hobgoblin available on a recent visit. More guest ales will be sourced from a choice of about 30 a month made available by Admiral. Stone floors and open fires make it a cosy venue at this time of year, and a simple food menu has been added. Lunchtime opening has been re-introduced (not Mondays), and on Monday evenings all pints cost £2.99.

RED LION: Four local people have taken over the pub, at the corner of Corn Street and Market Place, and transformed it into the Japanese-themed Koi restaurant and bar. They already operated the Chequers Smoke House, formerly the Chequers pub.

Brewery News

Alliance of Oxford Brewers

This is a new, informal co-operative of local breweries which supply beer to the city, which hopes to match the success of the London Brewers Alliance in working together to promote beer and brewing. Members are Hook Norton, XT, Loddon, Cotswold Brewing Company, White Horse, Loose Cannon, Wychwood, CATS, Shotover, Compass, Turpin, Lovibonds and North Cotswold. www.oxfordbrewers.org

Hook Norton

A new pilot plant, named Crafty Ales, had its first brew in November in collaboration with the Red Lion at Long Compton to celebrate the pub's 10th anniversary. It has also produced a beer called Rising Sun for the re-opening after refurbishment of The Sun Inn in Hook Norton village. A new Christmas beer called Greedy Goose will be available this year, as well as the regular seasonal ale Twelve Days. A 4.8% Double Stout will be available in January/February.

Lovebeer

This is the name of a new brewery in Milton, South Oxfordshire. Although it has been operational for over a year it has only recently been licensed to sell to the trade. A best bitter was first produced in August, but its main brew is called Molly's Malt and is a 4% amber ale made with three types of malt and a mix of English and New Zealand hops.

Shotover

Oxford Brookes University has launched a limited edition real ale brewed by Shotover, named John Henry after the founding father of the university and brewed to mark the 150th anniversary which it will celebrate in 2015. The ale was brewed and hand bottled at Shotover Brewery in Horspath by Brookes alumnus and proprietor Ed Murray, who used the National Brewing Library, which is housed at Oxford Brookes, to recreate a historic recipe which reflects how a premium beer might have tasted in 1865. This is when the Oxford School of Art, forerunner of the university, was opened.

Ed said: "It is an Export IPA at 7.1% and contains massive amounts of hops and malt by modern standards. Strong beers were usual in Victorian times to ensure they kept well without refrigeration, but beers made for export to the empire had to have outstanding keeping qualities to survive crossing the equator twice and months at sea."

Tony Goulding, chairman of Oxford CAMRA, added: "It really is a super beer and a credit to Ed. Thank you to the university for celebrating its anniversary with beer, when it could have so easily been wine or any other product. To choose a beer is superb, and I really am pleased." The ale is available to buy in limited edition, collector's item 750ml bottles (£11) and 500ml bottles (£3.99) at the Brookes Restaurant and the Colonnade store. Information about the National Brewing Archives can be found at www.brookes.ac.uk/library/speccoll/brewing.html along with contact details of the library.

West Berkshire

Led by brewing and pub entrepreneur David Bruce, it has unveiled a new, modern brand image and bottle design for its range of bitters, pale ales and stouts. Vicky Mills, WBB's newly-appointed marketing director, said: "We are absolutely delighted with the new image. It has driven further increases in sales across pub groups and off-



trade retailers, as well as opening up opportunities for export." Multi-award winning classic bitter Good Old Boy (4%) is among the newly-designed range, which also includes strong bitter Dr Hexter's Healer (5%), a Great British Beer Festival winner, and Mr Swift's Pale Ale (4%). Yule Fuel is its rich Christmas pudding-like beer with raisin, liquorice and wild berry fruit overtones. Monthly special for January – its 20th anniversary year – is Grizzle, which was first brewed in 1995. It is looking at a couple of trial varieties of hops: UK Amarillo, which is very floral/spicy with good bittering qualities; and Bullion, which has a strong zesty aroma and is commonly used in darker beers including stouts and porters.



Wadworth

As well as its range of core beers (6X, Henry's IPA, Horizon, Bishop's Tipple, Swordfish and Corvus Stout), it is distributing two seasonal beers. New is Dray Bells at 4.1%, alongside its usual winter warmer Old Timer at 5.8%.

Wychwood

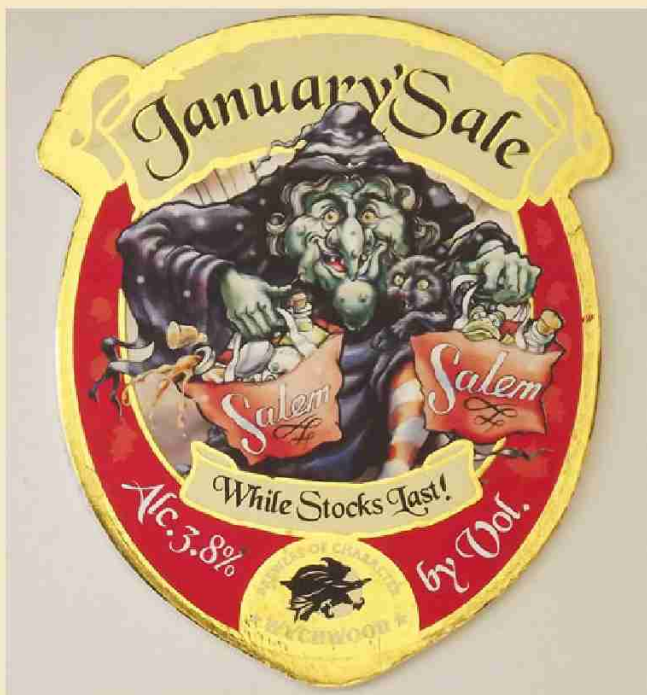
Following the success of Hobgoblin Gold in bottle, it is now available in cask. Launched in November at 4.2% ABV, it

combines no fewer than eight hop varieties and an infusion of wheat and malted barley, which has resulted in a golden beer with a huge hop punch. To celebrate, consumers are being asked to reminisce about Wychwood beers of yesteryear. Visit wychwood.co.uk/ancestry to find the brew that introduced you to Wychwood, say where you drank it and upload a photo to mark your place on the Wychwood ancestral tree.

Available soon is January's Ale, a warming amber coloured pint. The addition of Challenger and Northdown hops gives this session beer a distinct character to toast away the New Year blues.

XT

During October XT commissioned new brewing equipment to increase capacity and meet the growing demand, and some darker beers and winter specials are now available. NINE is a black ale brewed with an eclectic mix of roasted malts and generous additions of American hops, while the Christmas special is XT-25, a chestnut ale in the German Altbier tradition, slow brewed at a much cooler temperature than usual to give a smoother character. The Animal range is joined by a seasonal beer – Gobble! This is a stout brewed with roasted cocoa beans and orange peel, to give a rich coffee orange edge to a satisfying traditional stout recipe.



HOWZAT!

Stuart Bull, owner of the Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth, near Wheatley, continues his regular column by considering the effects of pubco reform



I HAD planned on writing a piece about quality, but then Dave, the editor of this magazine, emailed me about the cross-party amendment to the Small Business Bill passing through Parliament, which effectively ends the "beer tie" or agreement requiring tenanted pubs to only buy beer – often at inflated prices – from the company that owns them.

As a freeholder I was not overly concerned with this, but maybe I should think what might happen to the pub eco-system as a result. When Angie and I were looking into buying a pub, several years ago, we considered all the options: tenanted, leased and free house. We decided that the pub business wasn't for us unless we could have the latter, and the Cricketer's Arms is a freehold free house. What this means is that we can pick and choose our suppliers, and we owe money to a bank in the form of a mortgage.

For us, a leasehold free house would have been the next best thing: buy from where you want and pay a rent to the owner of the property. With the other two options, you buy your beer (and sometimes other drinks) from one supplier and pay that same supplier a rent. As a leaseholder, you can sell on the

business. As a tenant, you can't. That pretty much sums it up. It may not be a perfect description in all cases, but it's something we can work with here.

Now, as I said, having a tied lease or tenancy wasn't for us. We felt for our business plan to work, we needed to be able to stock a wide range of ales from small, independent breweries. The only model that would work for us was a free house. We have a niche, we trade on the quality of our ale, and we are happy with it.

The amendment to Small Business Bill gives tenants of pubcos the option to opt-out of the tie and pay a market rate rent. That sounds fair. There is no doubt in my mind, from the stories I read, that tenants of the big pubcos get a pretty raw deal. If I was in such a position and offered that sort of option, I'm sure I'd jump at the opportunity. In fact, I can't think why you wouldn't do it. For me though, this raises a number of questions, so let's indulge ourselves with a spot of futurology.

Firstly, what happens when every tenanted pub in the country operates like a free house? This is effectively what will happen. It seems to me that

it may be good news for small local brewer, which can easily sell its ale to any pub it chooses. There would be no need to get your beer onto special distribution lists just to put your beer into the little local pub at the end of the road. But hang on, though, so can any brewer. And the larger they come, the cheaper they'll be. So maybe the big brewers will undercut small, local brewers, which would have to trim prices to remain competitive.

This is good for tenants. The price they pay for a barrel of beer will drop without the tie, competition may reduce prices further, and they will have more choice. If the tenant's customers want the beer that they're used to drinking, they can have it. But the publican also has the opportunity to try something new. This is also good for free houses. And who knows, a drop in market price may even lead to a price drop at the bar.

What happens, though, when the pubco is no longer making huge profits from selling beer at inflated prices and their rental income is reduced? What's in it for them? All of a sudden, it seems like that little local pub at the end of the road would be worth more to pubco as a house, a car park, or a ... (insert

New Champion at Cricketer's Beer and Sausage Festival

alternative use here). It'll be safe until the end of the tenancy agreement, but then what? Shareholders demand a return. If that return is not forthcoming, then the sale of the asset might be the only way to increase short-term profit. Then the pubco can concentrate on managed houses and chain pubs.

There will likely still be some closures, but hopefully some will follow the community-owned pub trend and yet more will become privately owned, possibly with a small local brewer taking a stake. Either way, it should be a healthy mix, and if beer quality is maintained, then the pub ecosystem can only benefit as a result.

If you have read this far, you may be thinking, "Stuart is blathering on about this and that, but what does he really think about all these pubs now being able to compete on a level playing field with him?" So, as a freehold publican, do I fear this sudden influx of tenanted pubs free to choose their own beer? No, I welcome it. Competition is good, it stops you sitting on your laurels, and if a quality-served pint of beer is the end point, then this can only be good news for the British public house.

THERE WERE four brand new local breweries at The Cricketer's Arms, Littleworth's Autumn Beer & Sausage Festival, and with a handful of ales from familiar brewers, customers were looking forward to whetting their palates with some very different brews. With 16 ales and five ciders, there was plenty of variety on offer as the festival started with a bang on the Friday lunchtime.

A good turnout at Friday lunchtime was followed by a busy Friday night, with the Two Cocks Puritan making itself a firm favourite. The Saturday afternoon session was a cracker, with trade continuing to be busy throughout the evening and drinkers staying late into the night. All ales sold pretty evenly at this beer festival, with no obvious "gurners". In fact, many people commented that there wasn't a bad ale to be had in the whole 16. The first ales to sell out were Haresfoot Sun Dial and Yubberton YPA, as well as several sausage varieties and two of the ciders. Sunday lunchtime was again busy, with the unseasonable September sun making it feel nothing like an Autumn afternoon. By close of play on Sunday, there was precious little left on the festival bar. After a brief rest and re-opening, what remained was hoovered up by the returning locals.

Everything was packed away on Monday lunchtime, and by Monday evening, you wouldn't have known that The Cricketer's Arms had experienced one of its busiest weekends ever.

With incredibly strong competition, the three-times reigning Beer of the Festival

Champion, XT5, could surely not retain its title for a fourth successive time? It came in with an impressive average score of 8.8/10, the same as at the February beer festival, which means that it retained its previous highest ever overall average rating (it won with 8.6/10 last September and 7.8/10 in February 2013). Until this one, Hook Norton Old Hooky, though, gave it a run for its money, coming in just shy at 8.75/10. Which ale could possible score more? Answer: Two Cocks Viscount, with an unprecedented 9/10.

I emailed the brewers with the news on the Monday after I had totted up the scores: "You'll be pleased to know that Viscount has won Beer of the Festival this weekend, well done. Not an accolade on the scale of SIBA or anything, but important to us in our own little way." Two Cocks came back with, "Thanks so much for your email – we love to hear about how our beers are received at festivals, big or small, and are delighted your customers (and you!) liked our ale." They also made their excitement apparent on Twitter.

With all the competition, it was nice to see some of the new breweries also doing well. Especially CATS Tabby, coming in fourth with 8/10, with Two Cocks Puritan (the stout) in fifth, and Wild Weather brewery taking the next two spots. It's especially interesting to note, that a year and a half ago, CATS Tabby would have scored high enough to win Beer of the Festival. The next festival is on 20-22 February, 2015.

Backstage at the Beer Festival

Michael Corlett describes all the things going on behind the scenes to make our annual festival a success

BY THE time the Oxford Beer and Cider Festival comes around in October, a great deal of hard work has already been done by the organising committee but for most volunteers, the first opportunity to get involved is set -up on the Wednesday morning. It's a 9 o'clock start and all hands are on duty carrying the scaffolding up the stairs of the town hall and putting it together, forming the stillage to hold the beer.

Shortly afterwards, the lorry from CAMRA HQ arrives and it is another scramble to unload as quickly as possible, this time limited by the speed of the lift as some items are too heavy to carry. This delivery includes the all-important chillers and piping, and the cooling team are soon busy assembling them. I had a day's training on this last year at HQ, which unfortunately didn't include advice about not looking down the end of a pipe when somebody at the other end turns the water on but, as they

say, experience is the best teacher.

Throughout the day, casks of beer are turning up in twos and threes or in lorry loads depending on the supplier. Full casks are heavy, and care must be taken to avoid accidents. I remember an occasion when a brewer turned up with a cask under each arm (no mean feat) and then hefted one of them neatly into the palm of his hand before bowling it cleanly the length of the corridor, scattering volunteers to left and right like ninepins as it went. Impressive as this was, I think somebody had a word about safety because it hasn't been repeated since. It's a reminder, though, of the importance of wearing steel toe-capped boots (a must for set-up and take-down, and provided by CAMRA for those without their own).

By late afternoon, the stillage is built, the casks have been lifted into position and the cellar team

are well into spiling and tapping (the spile being the peg that allows excess gas to vent from the top side of the case and the tap being, as you might expect, the tap). The main hall of our impressive venue is beginning to look like a beer festival and before long, with the heavy work finished, we down tools for the day and turn our attention to the Gunner's Gold, racked bright and waiting for us on the stage. To adapt a quote I once read, "for a festival helper, after a hard day's work, two -- or even three -- pints of good ale would not be too many" and we certainly proved that.

Thursday is another early start to finish the set-up -- building the bars, putting up signage and various odd jobs. The cellar team take on the gruelling challenge of tasting, to make sure all the beers are fit to serve, and all is good apart from just a few that need more time to settle. Coming up to 5pm, the focus turns to staffing the bars



and there is just time for a quick briefing (hygiene, how the tokens work, some pointers on finding the right choice of beer if asked for advice) before the doors are thrown open and our first eager visitors pile through.

Serving times are when we have the greatest number of helpers and one of the nice things about working over a number of years is coming across familiar faces, as well as meeting new ones. Some will be here until close of play, some can spare maybe just an hour, but all contribute to the vital task of transferring ale from cask to glass. Over the evening, the hall gradually becomes busier until people start drifting away at about 10pm to catch trains or buses, with an eye to work the next morning.

On Friday, the festival is open all day so after a bit of general tidying up it's back to the bars. The afternoon is not too busy and is a good time to chat with

customers. Some know exactly what they want, some know exactly what they like but want advice on finding a beer that matches their tastes, and for others the experience of real ale is a completely new one. I'm not an expert by any means, but there is always advice on hand from other volunteers and festival-goers who know their stuff are more than happy to chip in if they have a recommendation. Whether serving an old hand or a new one, after filling the glass and handing it over, there's always that first sip, the nod and the smile that tells you the customer is happy with the selection and that is a large part of what makes it all worthwhile.

One of the benefits of working at a beer festival is enjoying a few samples, and beer tokens are made available to all staff in return for their labour, but if I'm going to remain useful I find it best to moderate my intake. Remembering to drink enough

water and take breaks are just as important. From 5pm, the crowd builds steadily until we are at full capacity. Thanks to another good turnout of volunteers, the bars are well staffed and we just about manage to keep pace with our thirsty patrons. Apart from serving, another important job is getting people through the doors, taking entrance money and providing extra pages of tokens which is handled by a dedicated team overseen by our festival organiser -- also doing sterling service are the staffing officers and bar managers who keep the show on the road.

As the evening progresses, the beer starts disappearing faster and we are well on our way to selling out (leaving just the casks set aside for Saturday). New arrivals are made aware of the dwindling selection, but there is still a steady stream of people wanting to make the best of it. Time is called almost as the last cask is emptied and,



ABOVE: The calm before the storm at the cider bar

RIGHT: Roger Hughes gives the Hook Norton dray horses some welcome refreshments

PREVIOUS PAGE: Crowds gather in the impressive main hall (pictures courtesy of Keith Rigley)



with another full day coming up, I head home to bed.

Saturday starts with setting up the "Saturday Bar", holding 40 fresh casks. It is quiet early on, and because the main bars have been drunk dry we take turns taking down some of the stillage and the cooling. More people come in during the afternoon and for a while it is a case of serving one after another without pause. Inevitably, towards evening, the beers start to run out until there are only a handful left and then finally the last cask gives up its last pint and the festival is over - drained to the last drop -- and we begin to close up. At some festivals, this is when drinkers are directed to the cider bar. Now I have time to poke my head into the assembly room to find that they, too, have nothing left to sell despite the increase in quantity from the previous year, thanks to the hard work and dedication the cider team.

Sunday is take-down day. Empty casks need to be sorted for collection and the scaffolding

stacked on the ground floor. It's slightly easier than set-up, as the weight is travelling downhill, but still enough to stretch the muscles. Once again, steel toecaps and gloves are essential, as is constant attention to safety. I have worked in hazardous environments before but even so, one year, enthusiasm got the better of me and I managed to send a dustbin barrelling down the main stairs straight towards our esteemed organiser. Frozen in that moment of time before dustbin and organiser met, his face registered a succession of surprise, annoyance and then alarm (at least that is what I guessed from the fractionally raised eyebrow) but fortunately the bin was empty and, after performing a lightning save, he proceeded to communicate his opinion about my fumbling fingers and feeble wittedness -- by means of a slight lowering of the same eyebrow. Lesson learned.

This year, as with set-up, everything goes like clockwork

and by lunchtime we are done with another festival behind us. Having worked up an appetite, and a thirst, it's off to the Royal Blenheim for a roast dinner and one or two (or maybe even three) pints amid an atmosphere of conviviality and general good cheer. Early indications are that it's the most successful Oxford Beer Festival ever, with around 4,100 through the door, but the most important outcome is always that volunteers and customers alike enjoyed a first-class selection of ales and cider among good company, and if the conversation over our Yorkshire Pudds is anything to go by, that was certainly achieved.

Plans are already in the making for next year, so if you enjoy good beer, and think you might enjoy introducing others to good beer, and if you are a CAMRA member (and if not, why not?) then why not make a date in your diary (15-17 October) to come and lend a hand -- the more the merrier!

MICHAEL CORLETT



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.



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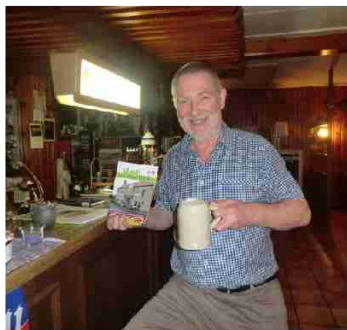
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Tony's travels

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

Blechington

The Blacks Head Inn on the main road through the village, near Kidlington, is a former Halls house now owned by Enterprise which is leased to one of the many small but unknown pub companies. For a couple of years it has played second fiddle to the nearby Rock of Gibraltar, but a new couple have taken over and hope to revive the fortunes of this multi-roomed, spacious locals' pub. A friendly welcome was offered with the former tenant of the Red Lion in Islip helping out for the night behind the bar. St Austell Tribute was served in good form with a second guest ale from the Enterprise range coming on later, along with limited pub food. Let's help this village local get back to its position at the heart of the community.

Wootton (near Woodstock)

Second pub of the night was The Killingworth Castle, a former Morland house taken over by Greene King but closed and derelict by 2006. It has not only risen from the ashes but become one of the top three out of 200 on the North Oxfordshire pub scene. How you can close

such a busy popular pub as the Killingworth is bizarre, but welcome to the small and ambitious company which has saved the last pub in the village in such a super way. Top class food in classic refined pub surroundings is the main emphasis but drinkers are also welcome, as they must be with five beers on the bar. I daresay that on Friday and Saturday evenings the pub would be full of trendy foodies (it was named Restaurant of the Year by the *Oxford Times*), but that's the way some of these village locals will survive. The ales served all in good condition were Nethergate Suffolk County, Cats Tabby by North Oxfordshire's Cats Brewing Co, and three beers brewed especially for The Killingworth Castle and sister pub the Ebrington Arms in Gloucestershire by Cotswold Brewery. These I sampled in good condition but failed to note the beer names.

Woodstock

The final pub visited was The Black Prince, the top pub in Woodstock, down the hill on the main road with a spacious comfortable garden next to the River Glyne. It always has four

beers on, and on the night these were Old Hooky, St Austell Tribute, St Austell Trelawny and Black Sheep Reaper, the latter two being sampled and tasting good. The Black Prince is always worth the climb back up to town after a drink or sampling the good food in the comfortable single long bar. On this Sunday night all the pubs we visited were very quiet, just my scene but not good for business. My only small moan were the seemingly bored chaps in the Killingworth and the barmaid in the Black Prince also waiting for the evening's close.

Marston

It's very rare (for myself) to have a meal in a pub, but while delivering the *Oxford Drinker* and celebrating my wife's birthday I visited the very well run Red Lion in Marston serving good, simple pub food along with four beers – Morland Original, Old Speckled Hen, Greene King Abbot and Hogs Back TEA (Traditional English Ale), a half of which was very tasty. Greene King has been very helpful along with the super Steve and his wife

TONY GOULDING

A Campaign of Two Halves

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Britain's
Pubs!



Join CAMRA Today

Complete the Direct Debit form below 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 Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

Your Details

Title _____ Surname _____

Forename(s) _____

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email address _____

Tel No(s) _____

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title _____ Surname _____

Forename(s) _____

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) _____

Direct Debit Non DD

Single Membership

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£25 ☐

(UK & EU)

Joint Membership

£28 ☐

£30 ☐

(Partner at the same address)

For Young Member and concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201.

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 _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Applications will be processed within 21 days.

01/06

**Campaigning for Pub Goers
& Beer Drinkers**

**Enjoying Real Ale
& Pubs**

Join CAMRA today – www.camra.org.uk/joinus



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:
Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4LW

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society Service User Number

To the Manager Bank or Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder

Branch Sort Code

Bank or Building Society Account Number

Reference

9 2 6 1 2 9

FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is out part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Member's Up Number

Name

Postcode

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society

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 it will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date



This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- The Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debit.
- 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.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

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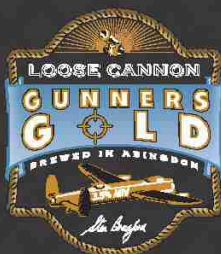
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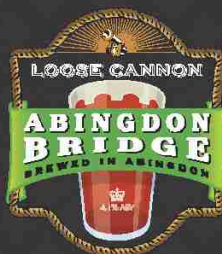
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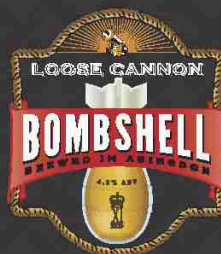
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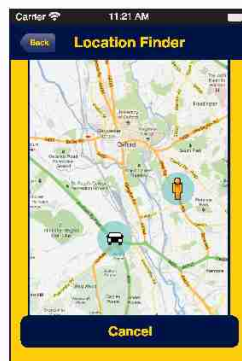
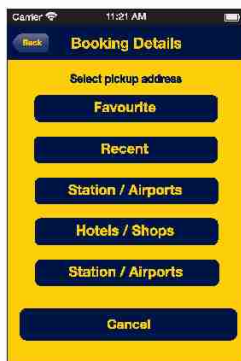


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Nag's Head is "Town and Country Pub of The Year" - again!



THE NAG'S HEAD on the Thames in Abingdon was crowned Oxford CAMRA Town and Country Pub of the Year for the second year in a row earlier this year. In the couple of years since it was opened by licensee Dushan Salwathura, the Nag's has become a popular destination in Abingdon for its quality food, its riverside garden, and of course, it's real ales. The pub has become a regular entry in the Good Beer Guide and is kind enough to offer CAMRA members a discount on purchases of real ale!

Our photograph shows Dushan being presented with his certificate by Branch Secretary Steve Lawrence.

WYCHWOOD BREWERY

Store & Tours



*Our Brewery Store is open
10am - 5pm
Monday to Saturday*

The Hobgoblin orders you to come and browse his selection of gifts and merchandise with exclusive in-store offers and promotions on bottled and cask beers.

Brewery tours operate every Friday, Saturday and Sunday offering a two hour experience for those interested in seeing mischief in the making.

Come and see us if you dare but be warned...most things bite!

*Book online at www.wychwood.co.uk
or call: 01993 890 800**

*(*pre booking essential)*

Wychwood Brewery, Eagle Maltings, The Crofts, Witney, Oxon OX28 4DP