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FOR
REAL ALE**

Issue 96
August - September 2016

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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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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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Welcome

..... as one pub
door opens,
another closes

BELOW: Peter Jones at the
Queens Head in Eynsham



THE OPENING of one new pub and likely closure of a long-established village hostelry are among the things you can read about in this issue, and both developments are symptomatic of what is happening on the pubs scene nationally. While there are arguably too many pubs in some places, there never seem to be enough in others.

Oxford City is of course the place that can't get enough, and yet another drinking establishment opens on George Street this summer in the shape of Pint Shop (see Pub News). It promises up to 24 beers, 92 gins and drinking and dining space for over 200 people, and while many of the beers will be craft kegs, there is likely to be a good choice of real ale too as at the first Pint Shop, in Cambridge, listed in the Good Beer Guide.

George Street's pubs and restaurants appeal to a mainly young crowd, so Pint Shop may well succeed despite all the competition around it. But the outlook for pubs in the suburbs of Oxford and in towns and villages is more variable, and there have already been many closures.

As you will read in the Eynsham feature (on page 6) the Queen's Head may well close later this year as the long-serving tenant – over 30 years at the same pub – calls it a day. It's sad to hear that such a hard working person can't make a living

anymore, and that story has been repeated time and time again. Will it be missed? Could it be revived as a gastro-pub, or whatever? Maybe we should accept that some places have too many pubs, and in Eynsham – unlike small villages and some parts of Oxford – there are other pubs within easy walking distance of the Queen's Head.

In this issue you can also read about how CAMRA can help save threatened pubs, by getting them listed as Assets of Community Value (ACVs). Listing doesn't guarantee a pub's future but it does offer a stay of execution in case someone can come up with the money, and it does ensure that planning permission is necessary before conversion to other uses.

As many drinkers feel, the battle for real ale has been won but the battle to save pubs is ongoing. Read about scenarios for the future direction of CAMRA on pages 12-13, and your views are always welcome by using the Contacts information.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, but spare a thought for people running pubs who give good service to the community but find life a struggle. They can't all set up shop on George Street, and with every pub that closes, a little of our traditional way of life disappears along with it.

DAVE RICHARDSON

Anyone for Eynsham?

Dave Richardson
visits a village
midway between
Oxford and Witney

BEARING IN MIND the national climate, Eynsham has led a charmed life in recent years with only one pub, the Star Inn, having closed. Sadly there may soon be another, as I discovered when visiting seven of the eight pubs in this attractive village (the eighth is the Evenlode, a carvery pub on the main A40 road).

In Market Place I read about the history of a village once dominated by a medieval abbey, which includes this: "With the mass of people and availability of alcohol, the markets could be dangerous places and on one occasion, two Oxford students were killed in a riot." It's more peaceful nowadays. I turned my steps towards the Red Lion.

This is a large pub sorely in need of some TLC, and I wish new landlady Marion Roberts good luck in her efforts to restore it. The Red Lion is a former Greene King pub now owned by Hawthorn Leisure, whose agreement to source beer from GK appears to have lapsed. Sharp's Doom Bar and Timothy Taylor Landlord were on the bar but both were off, so I had to have a keg cider. Marion hopes to get a third hand pump in service as she recognises the importance of real ale, and she also hopes to resume basic pub grub as no food was being served in July.

It's a pub with great potential, with lots of space and a large garden. But at present it's not a place I wanted to linger, and hopefully on my next visit it will

have a broader range of beer and a broader range of customers.

We found Punch Taverns' Jolly Sportsman closed temporarily for a revamp, with only a Doom Bar pump visible through the window. But just along the street is the Swan Hotel, where I found some decent beer in the shape of Otter's Amber (4%) and Purity's ever reliable Ubu (4.5%), with a half of each going down a treat. Hook Norton beers are regularly available here and recent guests had included Timothy Taylor Boltmaker and Upham Brewery's Punter – evidence that the pub, with four hand pumps, takes its beer seriously.

The Swan is a 17th century building which is also a small hotel, and it opened a Thai restaurant in February. Landlords Keith O'Malley and Alexandra Davies have been at this Enterprise Inns property for just over a year and seem to be making a success of it, including live sports, pool, Aunt Sally and darts.

It was now time to move into the back streets to seek out the White Hart, a building dating from 1366 which became a pub in 1750, adopting its current name in 1835. It was once a coaching inn and still does bed and breakfast, with a large garden at the rear which you might not notice if you don't go through the gate.

It's obviously very old with two deep fireplaces (one functioning) and thick walls, and



this is another pub with great potential for its new landlady, Cynthia Caspers, a Namibian who welcomed the chance to move from London via the Three Horseshoes in Garsington. It's a Greene King house with only two real ales on – the insipid IPA and a summer special, Doosra, a distinctly malty 4.2% pale ale named after a cricketing manoeuvre. Let's hope guest beers from the GK range make an appearance in future.

We then carried on along Newland Street, an attractive stone-built thoroughfare, to the appropriately named Newlands Inn, a free house. This is another old pub that doesn't serve food, but through choice rather than circumstances. It was a major food pub for many years but now courts a "wet-only" pub atmosphere, and was very busy unlike the White Hart. The regular beer is Ringwood Best Bitter while the others vary, and tonight these were Loose Cannon's Bombshell and Thwaites' Lancaster Bomber, the latter being my choice and very tasty too. This might well be my local if I lived in Eynsham.

We then moved on to the Queen's Head, another very traditional pub where sadly, the rumours proved true as long-serving landlord Peter Jones expects to give up before the end of the year after serving the Eynsham community for 33 years. He leases the pub from Admiral Taverns but doesn't expect anyone to acquire his lease, so the pub may well

close. Peter has run it for Courage, Watney Mann, Whitbread, Morland, Greene King and then Admiral, but the returns have been diminishing.

"We've always been a traditional pub selling a bit of food, but Eynsham has become a retirement village and people don't come out as much as they used to," he says. "Young people don't seem to drink much, as the health message has been hammered home to them. I love the job and I love this pub, and people say they are sad to see me go. But they just don't come in as often as they did, and I am taking in the same amount of money as I did in 2001. It is not a maintainable trade any more."

So enjoy the Queen's Head while you can. Doom Bar and White Horse Village Idiot (very tasty) are the regular beers,

while a third hand pump usually dispenses another local or a Cornish ale. The railway themed lounge bar is a treat – Eynsham lost its passenger service in 1964 – but the mementoes will go to a good home.

On the way back home – courtesy of Tony Goulding's wonderful not-for-profit taxi service! – there was just time to stop off at the food oriented Talbot Inn, close to Swinford toll bridge, an Arkell's house where, unusually, all the ale is dispensed straight from the barrel rather than hand pumps. A half of Moonlight went down well, but I couldn't get over my sadness at the loss of the Queen's Head and a publican who has given most of his working life to the trade. Good luck, Peter – Eynsham will be the poorer without you.



Down Memory Lane

FOR THIS ISSUE'S dip into my book *Oxford Pubs*, we look at hostelrys in the St Clement's area starting with the Angel and Greyhound. Many people know that it is named after Angel and Greyhound Meadow, the public space behind it, but why is the meadow so called? That's because of two long since disappeared pubs, or coaching inns to be precise.

The Angel stood on the High Street where the University Examination Schools were built after the inn was demolished in the 1860s. The name was first recorded in 1510, and it was a major establishment accommodating up to 13,000 overnight guests a year.

The Greyhound Inn, dating from 1526, stood on the corner of High Street and Longwall Street and closed in 1845 when Magdalen College, its owner, needed the land for expansion. Both the Angel and the Greyhound needed somewhere to graze horses used by guests and stagecoaches, and that

spot was a meadow on the far side of Magdalen Bridge.

The pub we see today dates from 1880 and, like so many pubs, has had various names. In 1920 it became the Burton Ale Stores and in 1970 the Oranges and Lemons, after the nursery rhyme. By the 1980s it was a wine bar called Parker's but in 1991 it was acquired by Young's and reverted to its original name.

A very large photograph inside – effectively a mural – shows a group of regulars in Oranges and Lemons days, when it was known as a gathering place for punks. Today it welcomes all comers, with long serving landlords Richard and Kathryn Gibson being a popular couple. I always enjoy his chalked-up weather reports, ending with: "For more information, step outside"!

Further along St Clement's is the Port Mahon, a Greene King house and an imposing stone-built edifice dating from 1710 which has changed little on the outside, apart from a small extension. This pub has had the same name throughout and commemorates the Battle of Mahon on the Spanish island of

Menorca, which was fought in 1708 and delivered the island into British hands. The French took over in 1756 after a second battle, when what is now an everyday food item was devised for the victory banquet – a sauce called mayonnaise.

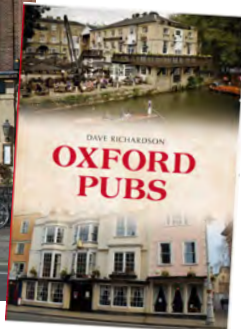
Two more pubs stood on St Clement's that are now gone – the Coach and Horses, now a guest-house of the same name; and the Duke of Edinburgh, now Joe Perks & Co cocktail bar.

At the city end of St Clement's is the Half Moon (1823), another Greene King pub, once one of the smallest in Oxford until it acquired the premises next door which blends in perfectly well. Once an Irish bar and still well-known as a live music and late night venue, it is a true character pub which usually has guest beers available.

Right on The Plain, the roundabout at the end of Magdalen Bridge, is the Cape of Good Hope – a large pub popular with students. This is another pub that has had several identities, including the Hobgoblin and the less-than-inspiring The Pub Oxford, before reverting to a name first used in 1785. It is named after a point near the southernmost tip of Africa, though no-one is quite sure why.

If you have memories you'd like to share, contact me at editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk. To buy a signed copy of *Oxford Pubs*, email me at this address or visit www.oxfordpubhistory.co.uk

DAVE RICHARDSON



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Pub News

Abingdon

BROAD FACE: Closed on and off for the last few years, the pub again closed in June although Greene King has submitted plans to renovate it.

CROSS KEYS: Redevelopment of the former pub in Ock Street is now under way with flats due to be available by the end of the year.

GRAPES: This sports bar now sports the elegant bunch of grapes sign that hung outside the Grapes in Oxford, until the latter was rebranded as Beerd last year.



OLD ANCHOR: Josh and Tasha took over the Old Anchor during June having moved up from London where they managed a successful pub in Marylebone. The Anchor was initially shut to allow for redecoration and minor alterations and is now open as a "pub that serves decent food". There are four ales on tap, the two regulars being one from Loose Cannon and Morlands Original, plus two guests from the Greene King stable.

Beckley



ABINGDON ARMS: The pub has been put up for sale freehold by the Brakspear pubco, but because successive tenants have been unable to make a success of the business, local residents (including CAMRA members) anticipated the sale and ensured its listing as an Asset of Community Value. Residents of Beckley and adjacent villages are now trying to raise the capital for a community purchase, and have exciting ideas for the Abingdon Arms' future as a community pub to include a shop, cafe, social amenities and potentially a micro-brewery. CAMRA members are welcome to invest in this community venture and if you are interested, contact Mike Hobbs: mike.jd.hobbs@gmail.com

Begbroke

ROYAL SUN: This Punch Taverns house has re-opened after a £100,000 refurbishment with bright furniture and fittings and a new team who already run the Hart at Harwell, near Didcot, headed by Bogdan from a Romanian family firmly settled

here. It has established a very high standard of freshly cooked meals to order, and has a comfortable bar area for drinkers with Hooky Bitter and a tasty Thwaites' Lancaster Bomber available on the day as the present regular beers supported by Punch Taverns.

Colehill

RADNOR ARMS: It now offers a 50p discount on all real ales on production of a CAMRA membership card. The adjacent Old Forge micro-brewery launched two new ales for its Open Day in July: Ruby Mild (3.8%) and Old Forge Best (4.2%).

Oxford

BERKSHIRE: The Abingdon Road pub, latterly known as the Crooked Pot until reverting to its former name, was seeking a new tenant at the time of writing, having been passed on by Greene King to Hawthorn Leisure.

CASTLE TAVERN: The pub, long known as one of Oxford's leading gay venues, is being advertised for sale for £425,000 freehold with "alternative use potential". The area will change dramatically on completion of the Westgate redevelopment, scheduled for late 2017.

HALF MOON & JAMES STREET TAVERN:

These two pubs are back under the direct control of Greene King following the withdrawal of a tenant who also ran the now defunct Fisher micro-brewery. Also affected by the end of the same tenancy is the Rock of Gibraltar pub near Kidlington which, like the James Street Tavern, continues to have a good choice of real ale.

JACK RUSSELL: Locals are still resisting plans to demolish the Marston pub and erect flats on the site, but there seems little hope of it re-opening as a pub.

PINT SHOP: A late summer opening is being planned for what will be a major addition to the Oxford pub's scene, as the second property of a successful venture based in Cambridge. The George Street venue will join existing pubs and bars including Beerd, Wig and Pen, and George Street Social with over 220 places available. The Cambridge Pint Shop says it is "all about creating a place that embraces eating and drinking equally. A place where you feel equally at home having a few beers, a light lunch or a full blown feast. A place where people from all walks of life rub shoulders with each other. Our inspiration for Pint Shop came from the Beer Houses of the 1830s; the original 'Beer Houses' or 'Tom and Jerry Shops' as they became known, are viewed by many as the birthplace of today's pub. We have 10 beers on keg and six on cask. Most of our beer is British. All of it is from small brewers. Our beer list is ever changing."

WHITE RABBIT: CAMRA has presented the pub with a LocAle certificate (also presented to the Chequers) in recognition of its policy of having beers brewed within a 30-mile radius always available. Shotover (Scholar or Prospect) is a regular supplier, and on this occasion XT3, XT7 and XPA were also on offer, plus a craft beer called Hop Trick. Toby Hambly (pictured on right, with Chairman Pete Flynn), who became manager in February, said it was trying to be a

character pub appealing to a wide range of clientele – "a pub that feeds you, not a restaurant with a bar". Its pizza menu has a dedicated following and on one day it served 540 portions.



Witney

PLOUGH: The Bridge Street pub has re-opened after a really good spring clean and now looks and feels very comfortable. Four beers were on the bar on a recent visit, including a very tasty Otter Ale along with Hobgoblin, St Austell Tribute and Doom Bar. Two craft kegs were also noted (a sign of things to come?) and good food will make a comeback.

Yarnton

RED LION: The pub has re-opened following a short period of closure with Kerry and Vicky behind the bar, and the feedback indicates a positive future. Beers from the Hawthorn Leisure list are available with Hobgoblin, Hooky Bitter and Doom Bar available recently. Good value pub food is served lunchtimes and early evenings.



CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

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

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

Abingdon

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

Oxford

Britannia, Headington
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

CAMRA's Revitalisation Project - what's it all about?

Oxford CAMRA chairman **Pete Flynn** provides an overview, while **Dave Richardson** reports on one of 50 consultation meetings being held around the country

ARGUABLY CAMRA is one of the most successful consumer groups of all time. Starting with a handful of members in the early 1970s when membership details were stored in a shoe box for the first year, it has grown into an organisation with a membership of over 179,000. So why change?

CAMRA's leaders felt that the time had arrived for a complete overhaul of the organisation to meet today's needs. Back in 1970 beer represented 71% of all alcohol consumed in the UK but by the end of 2014 this figure had fallen to 36%. Back then we had 175 British breweries mostly dominated by the "Big Six". By contrast we now have around 1,500 breweries but a curious fact is that we now drink a lot less beer.

One of the four founder members, Michael Hardman, has returned to lead the Revitalisation Project – a wholesale review into the purpose and strategy of

CAMRA. Members will be invited to share their views about the future by completing surveys and attending one of 50 consultation meetings across the UK running until October. They will be asked whether CAMRA should move away from promoting and protecting traditional real ale and become more inclusive, or shed subsidiary issues that have become attached to the organisation over the years – such as pubs heritage, cider and foreign beer – in order to narrow its focus exclusively on cask-conditioned beer.

The Revitalisation Project is CAMRA's response to a beer and pub industry that has changed hugely since it was founded in 1971. The rise of craft keg and a resurgence of interest in beer in recent years, plus renewed threats to pubs, have challenged CAMRA to review if it is best positioned to represent its members in the future.

Back in the 1970s it wasn't necessary to save pubs as they were the hub of the local community, but the heavily discounted beer sold in supermarkets coupled with restrictions on drink driving and the smoking ban have all led to pub closures. Also the majority of pubs these days are owned by pubcos so there is an emphasis on profit, and a poorly performing pub could be sold and converted to a private house or some other venture.

The project could mark a fundamental turning point for CAMRA – so fundamental it

may no longer continue as the Campaign for Real Ale and instead become a campaign for pubs, or a campaign for all drinkers. The challenges are set out in a booklet, *Shaping the Future*, that has been sent to all members.

Michael Hardman says: "It's not up to us, though – it's up to our members to tell us what they want the campaign to do in the future. CAMRA has sometimes been criticised for failing to move with the times and being old-fashioned and reactionary, and failing to embrace developments in the pub and beer industry such as craft beer. This is the chance for our members to tell us who we should represent in the future and what we should be campaigning for.

"Who do we represent now, and who should we represent in the future to help secure the best outcome for brewing and the pub industry?" he adds. "If we want to play a key part in driving the beer market back into growth and to help create a thriving pub sector, do we continue with our narrow focus or should we become more inclusive? When we launched the campaign the most important thing was choice and combating poor quality beer. Now our members need to tell us what is important to them. We need to hear from as many CAMRA members as possible to tell us what they think the organisation should look like in the future."

Whatever happens CAMRA is going to look a lot different over

the next 45 years. It's a bold and, according to some, a high-risk strategy. Consultation sessions will be held not just with members but with selected people in the pub and brewing industry, and also with journalists and MPs. The members' weekend in April 2017 looks to be a very interesting event, when proposals arising from the consultation will be considered. For further information, go to www.camra.org.uk/revitalisation

Should we fight for real ale, or to protect all pubs?

Dave Richardson reports on a consultation meeting in Bicester

This was just one of over 50 consultation meetings being held up and down the country, but if it proves to be representative, CAMRA's focus will move away from real ale to representing all pub customers in future.

Pubs are still closing at a rate of 27 a week, and in a vote by about 30 people at this meeting, 52% felt CAMRA should represent all pub-goers, only 8% felt it should campaign for real ale only, and 20% felt it should campaign for real ale, cider and perry. Maybe it should become CAMRAP – the Campaign for Real Ale and Pubs?

Using hand-held click-pads recording votes instantly on a screen, members expressed an opinion on a wide range of issues with 77% feeling the battle for real ale had been won. The biggest cause of pub closures was cheap booze sold

by supermarkets and other "off sales", coupled with changes in social habits and rising property prices.

The presentation, by CAMRA head of communications Tom Stainer and former national chairman James Lynch, provided a "SWOT Analysis" of CAMRA, identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Strengths included the large number of volunteers, the branch network, the brand, festivals and political influence. Weaknesses included bureaucracy, the falling number of active members, inconsistency in policy and poor communication with members. On various policy issues, CAMRA "blows hot and cold".

Opportunities included the review now under way, understanding members better, and better communications. Threats were an ageing membership, competition from other organisations, and the anti-alcohol lobby.

James Lynch stressed that no decisions had been taken, adding: "Some are writing off this consultation as a token gesture, but it's for real. It won't be a roll-over for what CAMRA's National Executive wants to do, and we can't move forward until we have information from all 53 consultation meetings."

The next consultation meeting in this region is at Milton Keynes on 8 September. For a full list visit <https://revitalisation.camra.org.uk/get-involved/>



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FOR
REAL ALE**

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Helping to protect our Pubs

We explain how local communities – and also CAMRA branches – can give pubs protection against developers

IF YOU LOVE your local pub and think it adds value to your community, you can apply for it to be registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) to give it extra protection from developers (England only). Without ACV status developers can convert local pubs to a wide range of retail uses or even demolish them without applying for planning permission, denying local people a say.

CAMRA members, with the help of head office, can themselves apply for this listing – with approval needed from the local district council. The Fir Tree and Chester in the Iffley Road area have already been listed, while applications have been made regarding the White Hart at Wolvercote, the Hollybush in West Oxford and the General Elliott in South Hinksey. ACVs may also be sought for the Kite in West Oxford and Jolly Post

Boys in East Oxford. As this list indicates, ACVs can be sought for both open and closed pubs, the Hollybush and General Elliott being closed at the time of writing.

Why nominate my local?

Nominating a pub and securing support from the community demonstrates that it is important to the local area. In addition:

- ACV status means planning permission will be required for the pub to be converted to any other use or demolished.
- Sale of an ACV pub to a developer can be delayed for up to six months while the community explores options to keep the pub open.
- Property developers who want to avoid a contentious planning application may be dissuaded from buying an ACV listed pub.





**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Oxford Branch Diary

How do I nominate a pub?

To nominate your local, all you need to do is follow these simple steps:

- Decide who you are nominating on behalf of. You can either nominate as an unincorporated group of 21 local people, as a Parish Council, or in connection with a local group including CAMRA branches.
- Go to your council website and look up the section on Assets of Community Value or Right to Bid. Here you can download a nomination form (or if there isn't one available, CAMRA provides a template).
- Fill in the form with as much detail as you can on why the pub should be classified as a community asset.
- If nominating as an Unincorporated Group, demonstrate that at least 21 people from the local community support the listing of the pub.
- Check your local council website to see where the nomination needs to be submitted. Many councils have produced guidance explaining how they are accepting nominations.
- Request a receipt from the council to acknowledge it has received the form as planning protection.

What happens if a registered pub is up for sale?

As well as protecting your local pub from demolition or change of use without a planning application, ACV registration provides the opportunity for the community to bid for the pub.

If the owner of a registered pub wishes to sell to a property developer, a six-week interim moratorium period kicks in and the council will tell you. If during this time your local community group decides it would like to consider bidding to take the pub on, you can trigger a full moratorium period of six months which will give you time to raise finance, develop a business plan and make a bid to buy the asset on the open market.

It's important to stress that if you put your name to listing a pub, you will be under absolutely no obligation to bid to buy the pub in the future.

ACVs were introduced as part of the 2011 Localism Act to empower community groups to protect assets that matter to them – including pubs. There are currently over 1,200 pubs listed across England as ACVs, and CAMRA branches across England are continuing to submit nominations for pubs which add significant value to their local community.

If you require any further assistance you can contact CAMRA's Campaigns Officer, Faye Grima on 01727 798449. To contact the right person at our branch, email pubs_campaigns@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Saturday 27 August West Oxfordshire Survey Trip

Minibus trip to look at the pubs in the West of the county. Minibus will pick up from Oxford at 11.30 and Abingdon at 12 noon. To book a seat contact Steve at contact@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Saturday 3 September Branch Social

At the Masons Arms Beer Festival in Headington Quarry. Meet from 1pm. Also includes inter-branch Aunt Sally match with Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe branch.

Wednesday 7 September Branch Meeting

At the Brewery Tap, Ock Street, Abingdon, from 7.30pm. Meet beforehand at the Old Anchor, St Helens Wharf, for pre-meeting chat.

Saturday 17 September Branch Social

At the Beer & Sausage Festival at the Cricketer's Arms, Littleworth. Meet there from 1pm

Monday 3 October Branch Meeting

At the Chequers, High Street, Oxford at 7.30pm. Meet beforehand at the Bear, Alfred Street (6.30pm) and Wheatsheaf (7.00pm).

Oktoberfest ...in June

Chris Bamford
reports from Munich
on the branch's
annual "cultural" visit
abroad

WELL WE WENT in June, though the weather was more Oktoberish. It rained, a lot. A lot like here. We had one sunny afternoon spent in the Forschungs Brauerei garten in Perlach, south of Munich, where I have to confess I dozed in front of my half litre of Helles. Or maybe it was the Dunkles.

Matt Bullock had visited this brewery some years previously but had only recently found where it was again. It had been so good before he had no idea how he got back to Munich. There were six beers on offer -- the usual Helles (light) 4.9%, Dunkles (dark) 5.4%, Weissbier (wheat) 5.6%, Pils 5.6%, an Alkoholfrei beer at 0% and a blonde double bock at 8.2%. Naturally we tried five of them, in my case just a taste of the 8.2%, and Pils.



The name of the brewery "forschung" means experimental. It was set up in 1930 and founder Gottfried Jakob received many patents relating to the brewing industry.

We also met a German who had visited Witney. Unterhaching, his home, about a mile from Perlach, is twinned with Witney. I was the only Witney resident on the trip and hadn't realised where it was! We made friends.

In Munich we tried to visit as many Bierhalls as we could. Our timing -- we usually tried to visit them in the evenings -- and the weather usually made it impossible to get up to 19 of us eating and/or drinking at the same place and time.

The Hofbrauhaus was the one place we could rely on for space. In the UK I drink half pints, so I can try different beers. Having a litre in front of me was daunting, and a bit boring. Hofbrau beer mostly came in litre size. We had the Helles and a special. Chris H needed to dance, embarrassingly, again! The Oompah band was good.



In the Augustiner Brewery garden, the closest to our hotel and where we visited on our first and last night, there were hundreds of tables and benches under a forest of trees. You don't order beer here as it's already poured waiting on the bar -- the Edelstoff (real stuff!) at 5.6% or Hell 5.2% -- litre size and pay at checkout. Also on offer was a Weiss beer in half-litre glasses. Food here was self-service from a choice of giant pretzels, sausages with sauerkraut and potatoes, to pork dishes and grilled fish.

Later on our first night, in town, some of us found a tiny bar called Le Clou. There were five taps on the bar, with only two being used, a Hell beer and a Weissbier from the Paulaner brewery. Mike tried a third tap which was Pils and realised why no-one was drinking it. We eventually made friends with the landlady, Alexandra, who had got annoyed when Pete made to take over the bar while she was out having a cigarette. She liked us so much later that we were offered a round of Schnapps -- possibly because of Chris's dancing, or maybe the size of our bill. We joined in

Pub of the Year Volunteers Needed

We are now looking for committed volunteers to survey pubs for the Oxford City Pub of the Year (POTY) competition. A short-list will be drawn up at the September branch meeting from eligible pubs in the 2017 Good Beer Guide, which is published in September, and voting will take place over several weeks leading up to the branch meeting in December when the winner will be declared.

Volunteers, who must be CAMRA members and in the Oxford branch, will be required to visit each pub and vote according to CAMRA guidelines including beer quality, ambience, and the pub's sympathy with CAMRA's aims. For more information and voting forms, please contact branch secretary Steve Lawrence on contact@oxfordcamra.org.uk (01235 525436).

The Town and Country Pub of the Year, covering pubs outside Oxford city in our branch area, is being chosen as before by members taking part in minibus tours organised for this purpose. Contact Steve for more details.

Becoming POTY is a significant accolade for a pub, and the branch has decided that getting committed volunteers to vote is the fairest way of choosing the winner. Current holders of the award are the Lamb and Flag in Oxford and the Nag's Head in Abingdon.

CHRIS BAMFORD

as she played the national anthem – ours not theirs – to let us know it was Time, and then shuffled us out, firmly. As a footnote, a couple of us tried to go back to that bar at other times, and we were not very welcome!

When England played Wales we were in the Ratskeller, a cellar bar under the Neues Rathaus, the town hall, watching (and drinking) until one of us (no names) spilled a quantity of beer over a few others and we were thrown out (after the match, luckily).

Lowenbrau und Fransiskaner beer were on offer here, and the first chance to try some alternative beers, what we'd call craft beers. They were bottled, from Giesinger Brewery, which we also visited on the way back from Perlach. Dave tried the Baltic Rye Porter, while I tried the Lemon Drop which was rather too easy to drink at 7.8%. At the brewery I also tried the Wheat Stout at an unusually light 4%.

Schneider Weisse has a very traditional restaurant/bierhall which we tried out one

lunchtime, the original Schneider Weisse having been brewed in 1872. The food is Bavarian, the waitresses fierce. I had Leberknodel, sauerkraut and mash and a Radler, which is a shandy.

Our last dinner was at the Wirtshaus Ayinger Brewery Restaurant, which TripAdvisor reckons is the best restaurant in Munich – it wasn't bad and the beer was good too.

We did our best to try as many beers as possible. Although they all tasted very good to me, they were much of a muchness. Most breweries have the same five or six varieties of beer, whereas in the UK we have such a multitude of beers to try and no chance to taste them all -- but at least I can drink them in halves. All the breweries have very good websites, some very informative about the beer, and most of them are available in English.

Oh, and we also enjoyed some culture!



Tony's Travels

Tony Goulding gets out and about in Kidlington and Oxford

A QUICK WALK around my home patch found the two former Morrells pubs alongside the canal to be as good as ever. The Boat at Thrupp, which until the late 1990s was a basic two-room local, is now very much a well-known food house. There is a small bar for locals and drinkers, with four beers supplied by Greene King being always available – on the night these were Abbot, London Glory, a very tasty Old Trip and, more surprisingly, Timothy Taylor Landlord. It has a great rear garden where I tried to play football with the grandchildren – it's a good job Leicester City have enough players! John and Jane Honey are the hosts here.

The next pub is a five-minute walk along the canal to bridge 223. The Jolly Boatman on the A4260 road towards Banbury was extended about 20 years ago, and is again very much a food house with a garden next to the canal. The comfortable bar area serves three beers again supplied by Greene King, but on this occasion they were all guest ales including Timothy Taylor Landlord, Hooky Bitter and a really tasty Titanic Iceberg.

A 10-minute walk along the canal brings you to a former Halls house now owned by Punch, formerly the Wise Alderman but now called the Highwayman. I am not a great fan of name changes and don't think for one minute that more

people would use a pub as a result, but there is a lot going on here with accommodation, caravan parking and boat mooring. A comfortable single bar serves two beers which were Wadworth 6X and a very tasty St Austell Proper Job, along with popular Indian and Bangladeshi food.

A gentle 15-minute stroll took me to the King's Arms on The Moors, the top real ale pub in Kidlington. This sometimes quiet local (except Sundays when landlord Gerry entertains!) is still very good value for weekday lunch and Saturday evening food. Darts and Aunt Sally are played, and it has a comfortable rear function room where my wife had a special birthday. It is very much a pub for conversation with very good

beer dominated by an extensive selection of Marston's ales, with some surprise guests.

A short walk along Mill Street takes you to the Six Bells, another do-not-pass locals' boozer. Our second choice in Kidlington, this pub is very popular with drinkers of all ages who make the effort to walk across there. Two beers are served, always in top form (the Flying Monk Brewery Elmers passed every test), along with good value pub food and various sports. Punch Taverns has disposed of several pubs to New River Retail, including this one.

Continuing to the three pubs clustered together close to the village centre, the Black Horse is a former Morland now



sprawling, open plan Greene King house with up to five of its beers. Although it's very popular with all ages, service could at times be improved. Next door is Punch Taverns' Black Bull, not for many years much of a real ale house. Again a mixed crowd drink here and it is probably the "tough" pub of the village. Chinese food is served and available for take-away.

A few yards away is the Red Lion, refurbished about three years ago as a pizza palace, but a further change is due with a more family food scene to appear. A comfortable, music dominated, spacious building serving a mainly younger gang of drinkers, it had Doom Bar and a tasty Deuchars IPA when visited.

Down the main road is the

popular Nepalese restaurant Gurkha Village, formerly the Dog and then the Squire Basset pub. Good food is the purpose here but Wychwood's Hobgoblin is available to visitors. On the edge of Kidlington on the Bicester road at Gosford is the other King's Arms, with no real ale – it's a shame this very old building could not become a comfortable real ale outlet on a busy road.

There is a pub for everyone in Kidlington, and with a very good bus service from Oxford operating every five or 10 minutes, it is well worth an extended or short crawl. Send us your views and correct me on my opinions!

A teatime visit to Oxford and to the Kite did not disappoint, and it was good to see XT Brewery's

beers here as it has a supply deal with the current Greene King tenant. The hand pumps were serving Thatcher's and Old Rosie cider, two Greene King seasonal ales, XT3, Animal Manta and a very tasty Animal Grizzly. There is a positive locals' pub feel to the place and the notice board displayed something going on almost every night.

The Royal Blenheim now has an ever-changing cider, and on the day the other hand pumps were dominated by White Horse and Colchester breweries, the latter's AK Pale being superb. Looking in at the Crown, you will always find a good choice here with Triple F Brewery's Pressed Rat and Warthog being very tasty.

TONY GOULDING

LOOSE CANNON
BREWERY • ABINGDON

LOOSE CANNON
FLANDERS ALE
 BREWED IN ABINGDON
 4.4% VOL
 AUGUST 2016

LOOSE CANNON
RED ALE
 BREWED IN ABINGDON
 3.2% VOL
 SEPTEMBER 2016

LOOSE CANNON
WHISKY BISCUIT ALE
 BREWED IN ABINGDON
 MATURED WITH WHISKY OAK CHIPS
 4.4% VOL
 OCTOBER 2016

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✉ shop@lcbeers.co.uk [@LooseCannonBeer](https://twitter.com/LooseCannonBeer) [f LooseCannonBrewery](https://facebook.com/LooseCannonBrewery)

Brewery News

Fisher

The micro-brewery, based in Otmoor, is now defunct. Also see Pub News.

Hook Norton

Seasonal beers produced this summer include 167, a 6.7% ale to celebrate its 167th year of brewing. With auburn hues and strong fruity aromas, it is based on the ever popular Old Hooky and was the fastest selling beer at the Stratford-upon-Avon beer festival. Produced in celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday, Sovereign is a 4% golden ale with a sweet cordial nose and light floral and citrus flavours, brewed to a 90-year-old recipe in the year of the Queen's birth. This light yet still reasonably strong ale uses a combination of Maris Otter pale ale malt, flaked maize (very similar to cornflakes) and a large quantity of block and liquid sugars.

Loose Cannon

The monthly ale in July was NZ Pale which sold out in record time, so it is hoping for more of the same success with the next three seasonal brews, 4.4% Flanders Ale, 3.2% Red Ale and 4.4% Whiskey Biscuit Ale. Its summer seasonal Bombshell has been a strong seller once again and this together with the ever popular Gunners Gold has appeared on the international air show scene where they were snapped up in quick order at the Royal International Air Tattoo.

Monthly brewery tours are proving more and more popular, and Loose Cannon is already planning three tours for

Christmas. Book early to ensure you enjoy the chance to attend what is probably the cheapest "pub" in the UK for a night with details on www.lcbeers.co.uk. Follow the brewery on Facebook for special offers and regular brewery news.

The brand new maturation tank has finally arrived and is now being plumbed into the brewery. This tank will be used predominantly to help keep up with demand for keg Pilsner, which is selling very well in city locations.

Tap Social

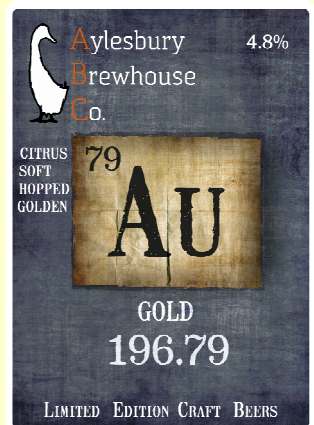
A disused industrial unit in Botley could be the location for a new brewery that aims to employ ex-offenders. According to an advertisement placed with SIBA, "Tap Social Movement is a start-up brewery and social enterprise aiming to provide training and employment opportunities to marginalised people through brewing. We are initially moving into premises in central Oxford, though aim to have impact nationwide by also placing those we work with at other breweries. The three founding partners are a diverse group of professionals with experience across business, law and the beer industry but the experienced brewer who was our fourth partner has been unable to join us. We are therefore looking for a skilled brewer with a passion for social justice who would be interested in joining our exciting venture at this early stage in return for a share in the business and a real chance to shape its direction."

Vale/ABC

Reading Beer Festival gave it another win with Gravititas winning Gold in its category. Building work continues, and also a brand new brewery shop is due to open this summer.

Beers coming soon include High Flyer, a 4% Red American hoppy beer to celebrate a bold pioneering English aviatrix, Amy Johnson, the first female pilot to fly halfway around the world. Moon is a 4.1% Pilsner style beer named after one of the greatest rock drummers, Keith Moon. Strange Love is a 4.3% copper ale that celebrates Peter Sellers, one of our best loved comedy actors.

Aylesbury Brewhouse Co has new beers coming thick and fast including Au 79, a golden 4.8% pale ale using the finest Maris Otter and Munich malts. Wall Walker is a "super beer" using the finest American hops at 3.8% while Kyudo, at 3.7%, is a Japanese inspired beer blending Sorachi Ace and Archer hops. The



South Pacific includes some of the world's most beautiful islands and is littered by tiny coral atolls, Bikini atoll being the most famous. Atoll at 4.6% is packed with hops from New Zealand to create a refreshing golden pale ale, while Cellular at 4.4% is a vivid red beer made with crystal and pale Maris Otter malts. There are always more beers in the pipeline at ABC, available as guests and at Aylesbury's brewpub the Hop Pole.

XT

XT has launched a beer in 330ml cans, the new XT IPA – a 4.2% hoppy pale ale. Some people may associate cans with fizzy lagers or high-strength tipples for your local park bench, but it regards cans as the perfect way to transport decent beer and says they are totally “flavour neutral”.

XT has been working on several collaboration brews, with the trendy Manchester brewer Brightside Brewing Co jointly producing North South Collide, a 4% super pale hoppy beer. Donkey is a 4.8% WitBier made with innovative Italian brewery BBBirra. The pale cloudy wheat beer has a spiced edge and hints of orange from Sardinian orange peel. Pukeko is a 4.6% Espresso Pale Ale, produced in a joint venture with a premium coffee micro-roastery in Jericho, Oxford – Jericho Coffee Traders.

The first of the very limited edition barrel-aged beers made a showing at the Haddenham Beer Festival in July. Special editions – all aged for at least three months – of XT-Ten, Thirteen, XPA and Eight were available, and more aged beers will be released over

the coming months.

The next XT open day is on Saturday 1 October with family fun, music, food and of course lots of beer – with free entry.

West Berkshire

WBB has added three new awards to its trophy cabinet. Two gold awards were won at the Society of Independent Brewers Association (SIBA) South East competition with Tamesis Extra Stout and Maggs' Magnificent Mild both gaining gold awards. CEO Simon Lewis is pictured picking up the Gold award for Maggs' Magnificent Mild.

A new brew, Wheaty McWheatface, won the Imbibe Live Wheat Beer Challenge. It was named following the brewery's #nameourbeer competition on Twitter, inspired of course by Boaty McBoatface.

WBB is now gearing up for OktoberWest Bierfest on 24 September 2016 (12.00-11.30pm) at the brewery in Yattendon, near Newbury. It

promises to be a cracker complete with some of the best local bands and Bavaria's finest brews alongside its own award-winning real ales and craft beers. Tickets will be priced at £12.50 for CAMRA members and can be purchased online (www.wbbrew.com) or by calling 01635202968.

Wychwood

The newest addition to the Wychwood bottled beer range is GRATIS, a 4.2% crafted golden beer. Brewed with pale ale malts and the flavoursome Styrian Goldings hop to give a light floral aroma, but a heady and firm bitterness, it is packed full of flavour and gluten-free – a no-grainer!

Coming to a pub near you in August and September is Wychwood Hoptathlon at 4.4%. This full-bodied golden ale is a cut above the rest using Target and First Gold hops to add a fruity and citrus spice edge, finished with tropical flavours from a dose of exotic hops.



Written in the Stars

Matt Ford, landlord of the Seven Stars in Marsh Baldon, continues his regular column



Hello to all. Thanks to those who came and sampled at our Beer Festival on 18-19 June – I think the consensus was that the Betty Stoggs (4%) from Skinners Brewery was the favourite, but there was also huge love for Bombshell (4.1%) and Recoil (4.2%) from Loose Cannon, and Cavalier Golden Ale (3.8%) from Two Cocks Brewery. Old Peculier (5.6%) from Theakston was excellent with the Hog Roast!

It's a Golden Summer for ale and as summer is supposedly here, we now have the usual stampede in the number of Golden Ales available to us – it's definitely a seasonal thing! Two Cocks' Cavalier and Diamond Lil, Hoppit and Ferryman's Gold from Loddon, Loose Cannon's Bombshell, Brill Gold from Vale Brewery, Purity Gold – these ales are

perfect for a warm summer's evening, not too strong and not too heavy either – they go really well with a Ploughman's Lunch!

It's now time to look forward to the Baldon Feast, on Saturday 20 August. Every year the locals host a feast on the green on the third Saturday in August – it's a fantastic event to support and we will be doing so with a Hog Roast. There will be music with local resident Bruce Don's band The Shakedown Prophets, who also played at our beer festival back in June. There will also be a fairground; market stalls; displays; loads of food outlets; and of course a bar stocking the best beer from Shotover Brewery.

Hope to see you soon.

Matt

Local Loves Beer – Interview #2

Phil – lives in Benson



Phil has been visiting the 'Stars for 19 years since moving to the area. His tippie nowadays tends to be low in ABV as he needs to get home! It's also something golden like Purity Gold or Two Cocks Cavalier. He likes to try something new and generally sticks to the local ales, although we may tempt him with a classic like St Austell Tribute or anything from Adnams



THE BEAR INN

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

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

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

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



6 Alfred Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX1 4EH
Telephone: 01865 728164
Email: bearinn@fullers.co.uk

Brewery Visits

1. Adkin

WHITE HORSE branch members enjoyed a splendid Saturday afternoon and belated Queen's 90th birthday bash courtesy of the good citizens of Adkin Way in Wantage and its most famous son, Shaun Cunningham, owner of Adkin Brewery.

Shaun has been running a half-gallon nano-brewery from a building close to his house for the past ten years. The current plant was installed in 2013, and with careful planning, Shaun

can manage two brews a day. His beers are often to be found at local festivals, occasionally at pubs in the Vale, and by order—in both cask and bottled form—from the brewery. Shaun gave us an entertaining tour around the brewery. We all fitted in ... just; as the photograph illustrates, brewery space is tight, but perfectly manageable.

For our visit, Shaun provided a lovely 4% pale ale, Alfred's Citra, comprising malt from Warminster and flavoured with citra hops. We were all encouraged to "pour our own" from one of Shaun's beer engines, and with practice—and yes we did—we soon became experts. Shaun also opened a few bottles of his far-from-standard 4% stout, a weaker cousin of his award-winning 5% JP Stout, for lovers of the dark stuff. Delicious food was kindly provided by the local community, and we were made to feel most welcome.



2. Bellinger's

THIS IS A five-barrel plant based in Grove, on Station Road behind Bellinger's Garage. It was founded in 2011 by the late Mike Bellinger and is now run by Matthew Rosum. The brewery has recently launched a rebranding and a new website with online shop, where a discount of 10% is available by entering the code CAMRA at checkout. Bottles and gift packs can also be purchased from the garage shop and you can normally find one of its beers at the nearby Volunteer pub, where you'll also receive a CAMRA discount.



On the night of our visit Matthew supplied us with Bellinger's Original at 4.1%. Other brews from Bellinger's include the brand new V (for victory) at 4.2% (made without cask finings) and Summer Ale at 3.7%.



King & Queen

White Horse CAMRA Country Pub of the Year 2016



Mark and Sally Goff took over the closed and boarded up pub at Longcot, near Faringdon, four years ago and have achieved a remarkable turnaround. Having been voted Oxfordshire Restaurant Awards' "best traditional pub" in 2014, and gained Booking.com's Excellence Award and TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence, the King and Queen has now been voted White Horse CAMRA's Country Pub of the Year 2016. This is a new award introduced by the White Horse branch to promote pubs across the countryside of the Vale of the White Horse.

The pub was built in the early 1800s to service the canal and brickworks in the time of William IV and Queen Adelaide, hence King and Queen. Three real ales and two draught ciders are always on offer. Loose Cannon Gunner's Gold (3.5%) and Ramsbury Deer Stalker (4%) are the regulars and the third engine has a guest, with Wychwood Goddess (4.1%) being the offering on 7 June. Many other breweries have appeared including XT, Prescott, Oakham and Skinners to name a few

www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk



White Horse Branch Diary

Tuesday 13 September Branch Meeting

Eagle, Eagle Lane, Watchfield
SN6 8TF.

Saturday 24 September Oxford Social Crawl

A visit to the pubs of Oxford. Meet at The St Aldates Tavern at 2pm.



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

Beer Festival Diary

Compiled by Richard Queralt

Further details can be found on our website www.oxford.camra.org.uk

Friday 26 - Monday 29
August

Summer Beer Festival

Kings Head & Bell, East St Helens
Street, Abingdon
01235 525362
www.kingsheadandbell-abingdon.com

Saturday 27 August

Chinnor Beer Festival

White's Field, Mill Lane, Chinnor,
nr Thame
www.chinnorbeerfest.org.uk

Saturday 27 - Sunday 28
August

Brill Festival

Brill Sports & Social Club, Church
Street, Brill, nr Thame
www.brillbeerfestival.co.uk

Friday 2 - Sunday 4
September

Headington Beer Festival

Mason's Arms, Quarry School
Place, Headington, Oxford
01865 764579
www.themasonsarmshq.co.uk

Friday 2 - Sunday 4
September

Bunkfest

Wallingford's music, dance &
beer festival
Kinecroft, Wallingford
30 beers & ciders
www.bunkfest.co.uk

Saturday 3 - Sunday 4
September

Perch Beer & Cider Festival

The Perch Inn, Binsey Lane,
Binsey, Oxford
01865 728891
www.the-perch.co.uk

Friday 9 - Saturday 10
September

Ardley with Fewcott Beer & Cider Festival

The Village Hall, Ardleywith
Fewcott
25 beers & ciders
www.ardleywithfewcottvillagehall.com



Friday 9 - Saturday 10
September

Moreton-in-Marsh Beer Festival

Moreton-in-Marsh Cricket Club,
Batsford Road, Moreton-in-Marsh
www.northcotswoldcamra.org.uk

Saturday 10 September

The Finstock Ale

Beer & folk festival
Finstock Playing Field, off Church
Rise, Finstock, nr Charlbury
www.thefinstockale.wordpress.com

Friday 16 - Sunday 18
September

Cricketers Arms Autumn Beer & Sausage Festival

Littleworth, nr Wheatley

01865 872738

www.cricketers-arms.co.uk

Saturday 24 September

Choko Beer Festival

Laurence Hall & Gardens, Church
Road, Cholsey, nr Wallingford
www.chokobeerfestival.org.uk

Saturday 24 September

Stonesfield Septembeerfest

Stonesfield Village Hall, Field
Close, Stonesfield, nr Woodstock
www.stonesfield.info

Friday 30 September -
Saturday 1 October

Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival

Ascot Racecourse, Ascot
www.ascotbeerfest.org.uk

Friday 30 September -
Sunday 2 October

Bletchington Beer Festival

Bletchington Sports and Social
Club, Oxford Road, Bletchington,
01869 351866
www.bletchingtonsportsandsocialclub.com

Saturday 1 October

Tree Hotel Oktoberfest

Church Way, Iffley, Oxford
01865 775974
www.iffley.treehotel.co.uk

Thursday 13 - Saturday 15
October

Oxford Beer & Cider Festival

Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford
140 beers and 60 ciders and
perries, plus 40 extra beers for
Saturday morning session
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

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01/15

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Pete's Pubs

Branch chairman Pete Flynn's Amble in Abingdon – Part 1

IT TAKES ME about 35 minutes to walk from my home in north Abingdon to the Loose Cannon Brewery situated within the Caldecott Industrial Estate just off the Drayton Road. It's a pleasant walk when the weather is good as it was today.

My journey was twofold; firstly to order some beer for my midweek BBQ, and secondly to review some of the pubs in central Abingdon. I always enjoy a trip to Loose Cannon as the beer is drawn straight from the tap and I get to chat to the very charming Merit, who is front of house at the brewery shop and an excellent ambassador for Loose Cannon. I opted for a mini polyp of Bombshell, a summer beer full of crisp citrus flavours, and bid her farewell for the time being.

I crossed the Drayton Road and made my way to the Midget (formerly the Magic Midget, a Greene King (GK) pub situated off Preston Road, named after an MG car built in the 1930s. The choice of beers was Morlands Original and Betty Stoggs and I opted for the latter, a malty bitter from Skinners Brewery, Truro, and, former Champion Beer of Great Britain.

My next stop, alongside the river, was The Old Anchor Inn, St Helen's Wharf. This GK pub has recently re-opened and is run by Josh and Tasha who have had experience of running pubs in London. The Old Anchor Inn on its present site can be dated to precisely 30 August 1884 when its licence was first granted. Five real ales were available and three of these were from the GK stable, but I chose a guest beer: Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge. As you might have guessed, I am a fan of our local brewery and I enjoyed the malty and slightly sweet tang of this bitter which was in excellent condition.

I spent some time chatting with Josh, who told me that he plans to continue with a Saturday BBQ during the summer and also the popular Thursday quiz nights. I wished them every success in their new venture and made my way through the winding alleyways in this historic part of the town to my next pub, the Brewery Tap.

This is a very popular venue and formerly the office/house of the head brewer of Morlands, prior to the closure of the plant back in the 1990s. The current pub, situated in Ock Street, emerged in December 1993.

The beer in this particular pub is always in excellent condition and the choice today included five real ales and one cider. I opted for the Shipyard Brewing Co, American IPA (5%). One of my favourite varieties is the IPA (India Pale Ale) and this, hoppy, full citrus flavoured liquid did not disappoint.

My last stop today was further along Ock Street, situated on the corner with Spring Road where another GK pub can be found, the White Horse. This is another popular pub with a pleasant garden offering no fewer than nine real ales – such a choice! I selected Roosters YPA, a pale, aromatic, summer ale that offers up delicate peachy fruit and berry flavours.

Abingdon offers the discerning beer drinker many good real ale pubs and I aim to continue my travels in the next edition of the *Oxford Drinker* as there are other pubs worthy of mention.

PETE FLYNN



ABOVE: Josh behind the bar of the Old Anchor

Ten men – and three women – in a boat

Dave Richardson enjoys a Thames cruise on the Nag's Head's own boat

The words 'booze cruise' came inevitably to mind as I surveyed the fare on board the *Esperance*, a classic river boat owned by the Nag's Head in Abingdon which is available for private charter. Seven polypins had been set up with 18 pints each, meaning there were 126 pints available for 13 people or nearly 10 pints each – not including the two crew, of course.

It was only 10am but the sun was over the yardarm somewhere in the world, if not in deepest Oxfordshire. Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge (4.1%) and Bombshell (4.2%) were joined by Rebellion's Blonde (4.3%) and copper ale Armada (4.2%), plus North Cotswold's Windrush Ale (3.6%) and White Horse's Village idiot

(4.1%) – a fine selection of ales from Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties indicative of what you might find on the bar at Oxford CAMRA's Town and Country Pub of the Year. Mr Whitehead's Heart of Hampshire cider (6%) was also available, plus lots of bottles nicely chilled on this hot summer's day.

This being the beer range and this being a CAMRA group, we got stuck in pretty soon after casting off towards Wallingford, fortified by a late breakfast served in the pub's garden. The Rebellion beers quickly became favourites and were the first to run out, with both the Blonde and the Armada being very much to my taste.

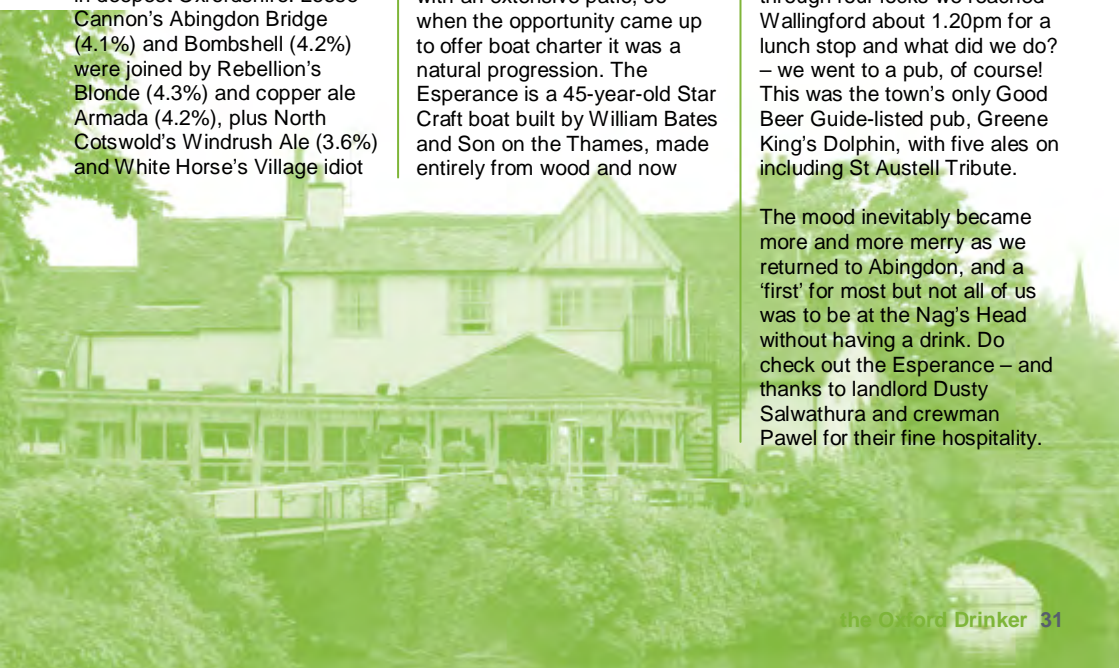
The Nag's Head makes the most of its riverside location with an extensive patio, so when the opportunity came up to offer boat charter it was a natural progression. The *Esperance* is a 45-year-old Star Craft boat built by William Bates and Son on the Thames, made entirely from wood and now

regarded as a classic. With space for up to about 20 people both on top and below, it's the ideal size for a party atmosphere.

I had never cruised this stretch of the river before and it was a revelation, deeply rural in nature despite flowing close to the villages of Clifton Hampden and Benson. You get a completely different view to when passing these villages by road, including some palatial homes on the riverside and plenty of wildlife including herons, swans, ducks and geese.

Although a toilet is on board a comfort stop was made at the Shillingford Bridge Hotel, and thank goodness the bar hadn't opened yet as we were well merry by now. After passing through four locks we reached Wallingford about 1.20pm for a lunch stop and what did we do? – we went to a pub, of course! This was the town's only Good Beer Guide-listed pub, Greene King's Dolphin, with five ales on including St Austell Tribute.

The mood inevitably became more and more merry as we returned to Abingdon, and a 'first' for most but not all of us was to be at the Nag's Head without having a drink. Do check out the *Esperance* – and thanks to landlord Dusty Salwathura and crewman Pawel for their fine hospitality.



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