

Issue 107  
August - September 2018

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CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE



# the Oxford Drinker



The pubs of Burton-upon-Trent, Carterton and Oxford;  
Focus on XT, LoveBeer and Oxbrew; plus all the regular pub  
and brewery news and views

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

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**FRONT COVER PICTURE :** The Beehive in Carterton; see page 26..

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

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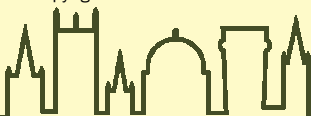
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# Welcome

...to cooling thoughts during a long, hot summer

**WHAT A SUMMER** it's been, and may still be depending when you read this. The hottest and driest summer since 1976 has generally been good for pubs and breweries as people piled in for a cooling beer, with England's run to the World Cup semi-final meaning millions of extra pints were served.

I remember 1976 well, as indeed I recall mini-heat waves over the years. Real ale had become scarce by 1976, and until relatively recently I just couldn't drink it in hot weather as it was served lukewarm and I became a reluctant lager or cider drinker.

How things have changed. It's very unusual nowadays to be served a lukewarm pint as cooling systems are more effective and many people prefer their drink at lower temperatures. But are some pubs going too far and serving real ale too cold?

Reader John King certainly thinks so, writing in to complain about a pint of St Austell Tribute at his regular haunt, the Kings Arms in Oxford: "It was served at such an extreme cold temperature I believed it was a dark lager," he wrote. "I complained and the bar staff informed me that there was a fault with the temperature controls, but the following night this freezing cold ale was again served. I was informed that they had to follow the instructions from Young's that real ale is to be dispensed at 6°C."

We followed this up, as Cask Marque (the organisation which accredits real ale pubs) says:

"The recommended dispense temperature of the majority of brewers is between 11-13°C. Cask Marque audits to a required range of 10-14°C allowing a little leeway. Some cask ales are meant to be dispensed at lower temperatures, particularly summer beers."

We then wrote to Jeremy Spencer at Young's who said its real ale should be served at 11°C. A test at the Kings Arms found that Young's Bitter was served at 11.1°C, Young's Special at 10.1°C and Tribute at 9.5°C, so the latter two were adjusted. Why John was told 6°C is anyone's guess.

What this does prove is that bar staff aren't always "on message", and if they are young they probably like all their drinks very cold in any case. I would plead for a moderate increase in temperature at the end of the summer, as no-one wants cold real ale in the autumn and winter.

In this issue you will find better news about re-opening pubs and of breweries diversifying, including the coming opening of Witney's first micro-pub. Our travels take us to Burton-on-Trent, traditional home of brewing, while we also look at how official tours present Oxford's historic pubs.

As ever, your news, views and contributions to the *Oxford Drinker* are welcome – just drop me a line.

**DAVE RICHARDSON**

[editor@oxford.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@oxford.camra.org.uk)



# The very heart of Brewing

**Dave Richardson** and **Pete Flynn** join an Oxford Beer Festival helpers' trip to Burton-upon-Trent



**I FIRST HEARD** about Burton's breweries when I was a boy of about 10, and an article in one of the railway magazines called "A Night on the Beer" described the many private brewery railways then serving this Midlands town. Although I had passed through many times on the train since then, I never actually visited Burton until April this year and what a revelation it turned out to be.

Not only does it have two major breweries and several smaller ones, but more than its share of great pubs. It's also a living history of Britain's brewing industry, best experienced at the National Brewery Centre developed out of the former Bass museum (see below), commemorating a brewery established here in 1777.

The brewing operations of Molson Coors and Marston's still dominate the skyline, with Molson Coors having brands as diverse as Carling, Cobra, Staropramen and Sharp's, maker of the ubiquitous Doom Bar after acquiring this Cornish brewery in 2011. It acquired Bass in 2002 but Bass is now brewed in Burton under contract by Marston's, as is some of



**LEFT:** The Devonshire (upper) and the Fuggle & Nugget (lower)

**ABOVE:** The Weighbridge and the Burton Bridge Inn



Oxfordshire's Hobgoblin ale due to a shortage of capacity at Marston's-owned Wychwood brewery in Witney.

By the middle of the 19th century, with the coming of the canals and then the railways, Burton was rivalled only by London as a centre for brewing. Bass had become the biggest brewery in the world, and by 1888 over 30 breweries were producing about three million barrels of beer a year in Burton. The mineral-rich waters of the River Trent were key, and in the 1820s Burton played a major role in developing a beer style that's very much in vogue again now – India Pale Ale (IPA), brewed originally for export to one of Britain's main colonies.

So there's much to ponder as you set out to visit a few of Burton's pubs, and the local CAMRA branch had kindly provided a map of no fewer than 30 pubs including seven in the 2018 edition of the *Good Beer Guide*. One of these, the **Roebuck Inn**, was my first stop – and what better to start with than a pint of draught Bass, which was excellent? The **Roebuck** is a popular, traditional pub with sports TV,

busy with football fans on their way to Burton Albion's ground.

This Victorian corner pub has a claim to fame as it was once the brewery tap for Ind Coope, which used to be opposite, and was where draught Burton Ale was launched in 1976. Sold on by Ind Coope to Punch and then Admiral Taverns, the **Roebuck** has continued to fly the flag for traditional ale with a choice which included, on this day, Theakston's Old Peculier, Marston's Pedigree, Greene King's Abbot, the renowned Dark Ruby Mild from Sarah Hughes, and local ale Storm, from Old Sawley brewery.

The Bass was so good that I had a second pint, thinking that if the big breweries' cask ales had been as good as this, would there now be so many small independent breweries in competition? But the big breweries went down a different route, of course, and continue to snap up brands which you might think are independent, such as Doom Bar.

From here it was just a few yards to one of Burton's micro-pubs, the **Last Heretic** – named after Burton-born Edward

Wightman who was the last person executed in England for heresy when burned at the stake for denouncing the church in 1612. The pub, which recently added a garden, has been open for just over two years and is clearly successful, dispensing all its beers straight from the barrel. Snacks and board games add to the traditional, though "micro", atmosphere.

My choice here was Tuck porter (4.7%), named after a certain Friar Tuck by Nottinghamshire brewer Lincoln Green, a rich and satisfying dark ale making a nice contrast with the Bass. Titanic's Raspberry Wheat (4.7%) and Tiny Rebel's Apache IPA (4.2%) were from well-known breweries among real ale enthusiasts, whereas Filly Close Blonde (3.9%) was from Reedley Hallows in Burnley, a new one on me. Four real ciders were also available, while on a blackboard, apologetically, the pub announced: "Match Day Special – Stella Pint Cans £3.50". It makes a point of welcoming away fans on match days, but this is still heresy!

Emerging on to Station Street

where the giant silos of Molson Coors tower over the town, we turned our steps over the railway bridge where the historic Midland Railway Grain Warehouse No.2 is now a Travelodge, which would make a great place to stay if I return. Opposite this is another piece of railway heritage, the **Weighbridge Inn**, a micro-pub which occupies former coal office buildings next to the weighbridge itself.

Open for only three years but with various changes of ownership already, it is now owned by Burton Old Cottage brewery and therefore a reliable place to find its beers. Only one of these was available, however – Halcyon Daze (5.3%), a fruity tasting beer and another contrast with my recently supped porter. Also available were Jobber and Little Jack from the aforementioned Old Sawley, and Milestone's Plum Porter, plus a couple of boxed ciders from Broadoak.

Despite the Carling tap (well, at least it's local!), I liked the range of beers and the prices (around £3-£3.20 a pint, as with the other pubs so far visited) more than the décor. All kinds of tat covers the walls and the fake bookshelf wallpaper is, well, tat as well – as is the fake wood burner. Apparently the feel of the place has improved, however, with one local describing its previous appearance as "like a dentist's waiting room"!

Heading towards the town centre, our next stop was at the **Devonshire Arms** owned by Burton Bridge brewery. Four of its ales were on offer, these being Bridge Bitter (4%), Draught Burton Ale (4.8%),

reviving a famous name), Golden Delicious (3.8%) and Stairway to Heaven (5%), and I chose the Burton which lived up to its name. Four real ciders were also on offer.

This large pub is a listed building, constructed around 1830 and becoming a pub in the 1850s. Local breweries Eadie's and Ind Coope ran it before Burton Bridge took over in 1998, and on the walls you will find plenty of history including lists of breweries and pubs in the town's heyday. It's a very traditional establishment, boisterous on a Saturday afternoon with Burton Albion fans celebrating victory over Bolton – though this was to prove insufficient to avoid relegation.

Our final stop would, I anticipated, be the best if not for beer than for ambience. So it proved to be as **Coopers Tavern** really is something special, the former Bass brewery tap and a worthy entry

in CAMRA's book *Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs*. It was originally no more than a store where senior brewers would meet to sample their products, with a list of publicans since 1823 on display. It wasn't licensed as a pub until 1858 but the back room remained off-limits except for the chosen few, until around 1950.

Remarkably **Coopers** has no bar, and you have to queue for your drink at a small counter. The historic back bar, main bar and snug all ooze history and character, with seating including benches and casks. After Bass the pub passed to Hardy's and Hanson's in 1991, then Tuns Taverns.

It is now owned by Joule's, whose available beers were the copper coloured Slumbering Monk (4.5%) and Frisky Rabbit (3.5%). The guest beers were of equal interest being Worcestershire Porter from Phoenix, Oakham JHB, Abbeydale's Voyageur, Shiny



Brewery's Disco Balls, Dancing Duck's Abduction, Wye Valley's Butty Bach and..... draught Bass. I couldn't help but have yet another pint of Bass in its spiritual and actual home, despite the many other temptations on offer (there are also eight boxed ciders from Lilley's, by the way).

The beers are either dispensed by hand pump or, in the case of the Bass and the Butty Bach, straight from the barrel. None of them cost more than £3.30, but despite this being a high quality establishment with so much choice, it still doesn't warrant a mention in the *Good Beer Guide* and that's hard to believe.

I enjoyed my pint while taking in much of the historical info on the walls, learning that this was where Bass's "brewer in charge" lived and that it was always dispensed directly from the cask, as today – "a Burton institution".

I also learned about the history of Joule's and what a colourful tale – with a twist! – it is. When based at nearby Stone it was a major rival of Bass, and according to the Joule's website: "In the 19th century Bass and Joule's glowered at one another from their Staffordshire towns with their pubs bordering each other like military forts. It was an acrimonious rivalry which was unusual within the cosy club of the beer barons. Both became regional giants, and both were ambitious.

"The acrimonious relationship with Bass never diminished and even intensified in the 20th century. Following more than 200 years of successful brewing Bass Charrington managed to

secure control of Joule's by persuading an old and confused widow of a family member to sell her shares. Bass had seized control of what was, by the early 1970s, a public company. Bass were swift, brutal and ruthless and closed the Stone brewery putting the entire Joule's family of workers on the street along with the board of directors. They then mercilessly scorched the earth demolishing the great Joule's Brewery in 1974."

Attempts to re-establish Joule's as an independent brand finally succeeded in 2009, by which time Bass had been broken up. Bass remains a trade name of Molson Coors, and while brewed under licence by Marston's it's now on sale in **Coopers**, a former Bass flagship run by Joule's. What goes around comes around!  
DAVE RICHARDSON

*Pete Flynn adds:*

The **Burton Bridge Inn** is well worth a visit as the brewery tap of this popular brand, a 10-barrel plant and winner of numerous CAMRA awards since opening in 1983. The pub also offers guest ales and has interconnecting rooms, unlike so many modern pubs which can best be described as soulless warehouses with an uninteresting range of beers. Lovers of Burton Ales will be familiar with the "Burton Snatch", a perfectly normal sulphurous smell which is a result of gases being given off from a cask of ale having been freshly spiled. The town of Burton uses local water which is full of natural salts and, unlike brewers from other towns, the water is ready for use immediately due to a condition

known as Burtonisation.

Another favourite pub is the **Fuggle and Nuggett**, one of a few micro-pubs in Burton. Run by Jane Laws and Shaun Rose this small but well managed establishment has been operating for about three years and has a regular base of loyal customers. Garry Hopper from the **Cask and Pottle** in nearby Tutbury helped them to set up, and it offers four changing beers. To keep costs to a minimum beers are ordered straight from a brewery; the emphasis is on Yorkshire beers as the couple are from there.

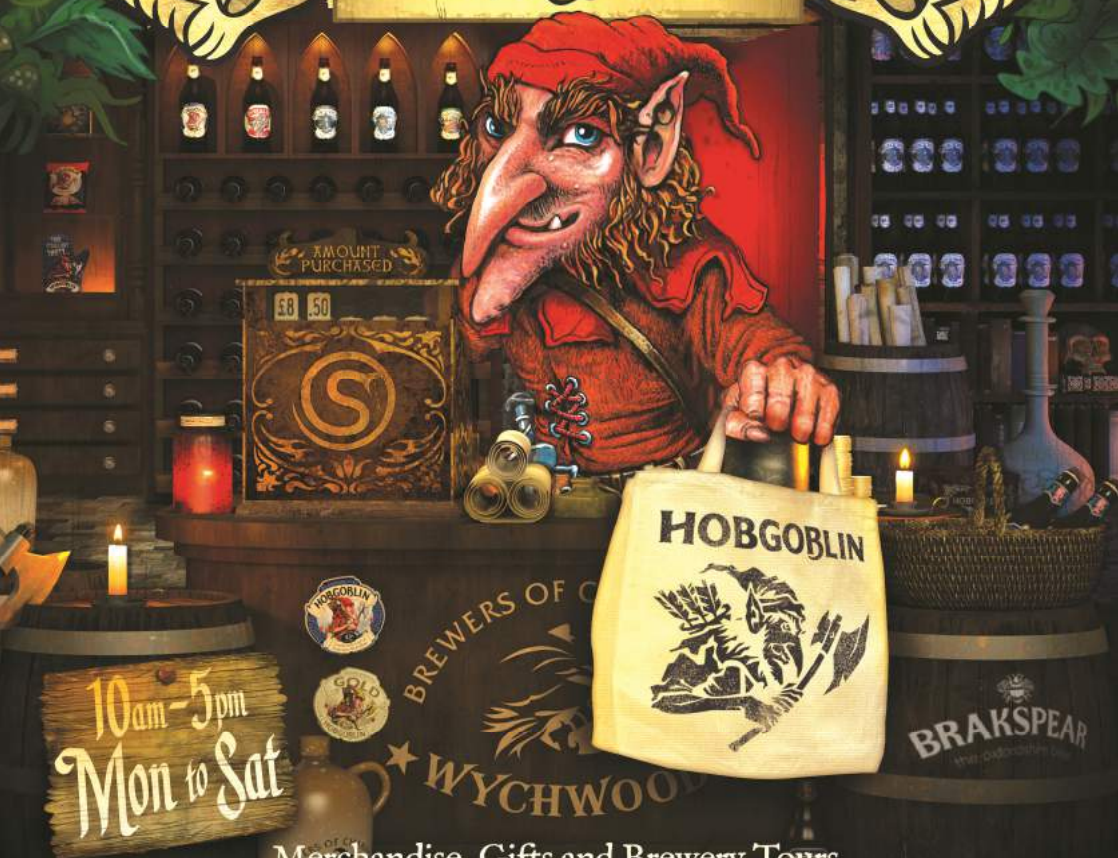
You don't have to have an interest in beer to enjoy a visit to the **National Brewery Centre** in Burton. This impressive museum offers a real insight into all aspects of social history relating to what has made this historic town so famous. If you decide to go on a tour you will be entertained by one of the many informative and friendly guides whilst you sample beer and match food. The tour is full of rich and beguiling tales of what is was like to work in a brewery, including the legendary Bass family and their role in the development of brewing.

There are lots of fun things to see and do including the role of steam, vintage vehicles, and the huge and loveable shire horses. The William Worthington micro-brewery brings the tour up to date whilst the tap room and restaurant offer beers brewed on site. The fully licensed Brewery Tap Restaurant offers a daily menu of freshly prepared, varied and imaginative food offering great quality at brilliant value.



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# Small is beautiful, and not just for economists

**Graham Shelton**, who led the community buy-out of the Red Lion at Northmoor, continues his regular column

**IT ISN'T EASY** finding birthday presents these days. The list of things that appeal to grumpy old men seems to shorten every year. Almost every kind of pastime seems to come with a hefty price tag, and if you want a real printed book you have to go to Oxfam.

I have this problem with my brothers, who are even older and grumpier than me, but they are the only ones I've got and after 70-odd years I'm fresh out of present ideas. We've pretty much done "things" so I guess it may come down to experiences instead. My eldest brother expressed an interest in appearing on *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*, so long as he could choose who he went with, but fortunately my contacts do not extend to the televised media, so we are spared that embarrassment.

I am pleased to report, however, that I have just partaken of a brilliant present from my youngest son Freddie: membership of the Loose Cannon Brewery in Abingdon. I didn't enquire about how much it cost but it is undoubtedly good

value for money. Freddie was sadly working in Scotland on the night, but I was fortunate indeed to go with a most able drinking companion: your very own chairman Pete Flynn.

It was a hot evening, so Pete and I had no trouble in trying all six offerings on the menu. It was great to find that Loose Cannon isn't just Abingdon Bridge; that lovely brew has five brothers and they are good too. Do go along as soon as you can. There is a waiting list, but it is worth the wait.

On the night we were there England beat Colombia in the World Cup, and Will Laithwaite (boss of Loose Cannon and generally Good Chap) wisely and generously hired a huge screen so that we could all watch. It occurred to me that a convivial evening watching England win at football – in a brewery with "free" booze – must be a rarity close to perfection for most blokes, and probably quite a few women too.

Economist E.F. Schumacher would certainly approve of the

modern trend towards lots of local micro-breweries. His book *Small is Beautiful* advocates small-scale, localised solutions to the problems in society, and although it isn't much of a page-turner, the ideas are good.

Down at the Red Lion in Northmoor, our landlady Lisa is working hard with another local brewer, Oxbrew of Enstone, to make an exclusive beverage. Quite soon all the community-owned pubs in Oxfordshire will be sporting their own Community Brew, and I am looking forward very much both to trying it and to reporting on it at greater length next time.

Community-owned pubs and micro-breweries go well together, so if you also think small is beautiful be sure to support them both all you can every week. I'm pretty sure that E.F. Schumacher would want us to follow the soundest economic principles while keeping our fluid levels up!



# A walk through pub history

**Dave Richardson** goes on an Experience Oxfordshire walking tour booked through the Oxford Visitor Information Centre

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?** Often not much in the case of pubs, as some change their names quite often. What's in a date? As there are many pubs mentioned in official records, dates at least should be sacrosanct.

But that might not be so either, and I thought of this recently when passing the re-painted St Aldates Tavern which has gained the legend "Est 1823" on the frontage. But that date doesn't appear in any of the books about our pubs, and St Aldates Tavern is much older.

But to confuse you even further, it was previously known as the Hobbogoblin, Bulldog, New Inn (all in living memory) and Christopher's Inn. The original St Aldates Tavern stood at no. 61 St Aldates nearer Folly Bridge and is now a student refectory, identifiable by the "Morland Artist" engraving of the brewery that used to own it. It was originally called the Apollo and dates from 1866. Or possibly 1772!

So how the present St Aldates Tavern came up with the date

1823 is a mystery to me, especially as this date wasn't mentioned when I asked the pub about its origins while researching my book *Oxford Pubs* published in 2015. The first mention of a pub on this site was in 1397, being rebuilt and renamed the New Inn in 1716.

I know this because my two illustrious predecessors who wrote books on the subject did indeed pore through the records. Paul J. Marriott's booklet *Oxford Pubs Past and Present* was the first definitive guide published in 1978, followed by Derek Honey's *Encyclopaedia of Oxford Pubs, Inns and Taverns* in 1998.

Tour guides need to know their stuff, so when I joined the recently re-introduced tour "Purely Pubs of Oxford" I was reassured to find our leader, Rob Walters, had my book and Derek Honey's. The group met outside the Mitre on the High Street, now mainly a restaurant and with beers supplied by Marston's.

Rob proved to be not only knowledgeable but also very funny, and the group – including visitors from Japan and Taiwan – was soon at ease. He talked us through the Mitre's proven claim to be Oxford's oldest pub (around 1285) although the present building is 18th century; and told us tales of its often



**LEFT:** Our guide, Rob Walters  
**RIGHT:** Rob and the rest of the group outside the Lamb and Flag

bloody past including anti-Catholic riots.

It was the first time I'd been in since it changed from Whitbread-owned Beefeater, and I was shocked and disappointed to see that most of the memorabilia had been stripped from the walls including a list of landlords going back through the centuries, and a bill advertising a coach and horses service to London. So doesn't the Mitre care about history? Wouldn't some emphasis on being the oldest pub attract more customers in?

That claim is made very publicly by the Bear, which we stopped outside but didn't visit. It claims to date from 1242 but that applies to the original Bear which was a large coaching inn with frontage on the High Street, although there is doubt about that date too. The present Bear dates from 1606 when built as an ostlers' house for the men who looked after the horses.

We strolled past the Wheatsheaf – where Rob casually dropped into his spiel that he once tried to buy the lease – and then to the Chequers, where he was prevailed upon to stop for a drink as it was a hot evening. This is another pub oozing history, so-named as chequers were the sign of moneylenders who used to be based here.



We definitely couldn't have had a drink at our next stop, as it ceased to be a pub in 1709! A plaque on the wall of Santander bank, Carfax, records it as location of the Swindlestock Tavern, scene of an infamous town versus gown riot in 1355 that cost many lives.

There's only one pub on Cornmarket Street now – the Crown, down an alleyway behind McDonald's – where we paused for Rob to explain its links with Shakespeare. But he also pointed out the site of other Cornmarket hosteleries, including a sign for the Plough which can be seen above a derelict shop that still bears the name Austin Reed. I must have walked down Cornmarket thousands of times but had never spotted that sign.

Our 1½-hour tour finished in St Giles where Rob explained the well-known history of the Eagle and Child (once a haunt of writers J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis), before we settled down for a drink in the Lamb and Flag opposite. Both names reflect the ownership of these pubs by St John's College, as insignia of St John the Evangelist and St John the Baptist.

We were all happy with the tour and glad to be having another drink, as this isn't a pub crawl

as such! Rob explained that he is one of several accredited green badge guides doing this tour, and the pubs visited may vary. The King's Arms, White Horse and Turf Tavern would be among the other contenders, but the latter is often too crowded to make yourself heard.

Rob, a CAMRA member since its very early days who attended its first AGM, also does private pub tours and guides general history tours of the city, and has written many books. Take a look at [www.robsbookshop.com](http://www.robsbookshop.com)

We didn't get around to debating accurate dates and St Aldates Tavern, but as I found out myself, any historian has his or her work cut out. The tour is highly recommended, but don't get too bogged down with dates and names.....

To book the Purely Pubs tour (£14), due to run fortnightly on Wednesdays throughout August and September, call 01865 686430, go to the visitor centre on Broad Street or visit <https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/product/official-pubs-oxford-tour/>

*My book Oxford Pubs can be bought online at <https://oxfordpubhistory.co.uk/>*



# Pub News

From the Oxford and White Horse regions

## Abingdon

### Old Anchor

The riverside pub, a Greene King tenancy, changed hands in June. It serves up to five GK real ales or ales from its guest list.

## Bampton

### Horseshoe

The pub re-opened after a closure of five months on 7 July and is now owned by Hawthorn Leisure which acquired it from Greene King. It is run by a consortium of Charlie Metcalf, Chris Baker and Steve Radband, trading as the Bridge Street Pub Company. The bar manager is Ian Everett. It intends to open Monday to Friday 12-10pm with slightly later closing over the weekend.

Sharp's Doom Bar and Morlands Original were available after opening, and a third pump is expected to serve Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge.

## Coleshill

### Radnor Arms

The village pub has been taken over by Paul Revell and is planning four additional hand pumps. Paul is a well-known landlord from Swindon having run the Carters Rest in Wroughton, a CAMRA award winner. Plans are being drawn up for a beer festival from 24-27 August.

## Filkins

### Five Alls

Barkby Group, which also owns the Plough in nearby Kelmscott, has taken over this gastro-pub in West Oxfordshire. It is well-known as a celebrity haunt.

## Newbridge

### Maybush Inn

This Thames-side pub was closed for refurbishment in July but is due to re-open soon, and operated a pop-up bar at weekends during the closure.

## Oxford

### Hollybush

Closed since 2015, this Osney Island pub in West Oxford now looks to have a future again as it has been taken over by Charles Wells. Oxford City Council refused an application to turn it into housing last year, saying it had not been proved that it was no longer viable as a

pub. West Oxford has suffered disproportionately from pub closures and local councillors and residents have welcomed the move.

### Oxford Blue

A possible clue as to the future of the Hollybush may be gained from a visit to this pub in Marston Street just off Iffley Road, recently taken over by Charles Wells. Once known as the Swan Inn, it is being marketed as Pizza, Pots and Pints with a genuine pizza oven and menu otherwise based on baked dishes.

Four hand pumps were serving on a recent visit, dispensing Young's Bitter, London Gold and Courage Director's from the Charles Wells range, plus a cask ale from its Wandering Brewer collaboration project involving small batch limited editions. These will change on a monthly basis into 2019, and drinkers can vote on their



favourites to influence what will be produced at the new Charles Wells brewery due to open in 2019.

### Somerset

Hopes that the last remaining pub in New Marston might be saved have been boosted by the city council's decision to add it to the Oxford Heritage Asset Register. Closed since 2014, the pub is threatened with conversion into an education centre and café by the Wilaya Trust, an Islamic organisation. The Save Our Somerset campaign has raised a petition signed by more than 700 people, with 200 supporting

regular pop-up pub events in a scout hall.

### Standlake

#### Bell

The closed pub is now owned by Few Inns, also owner of the nearby Black Horse, and hopes are rising that it might re-open.

### Wantage

#### Kings Arms

The pub re-opened under Oak Taverns ownership in July, with an emphasis on six real ales and craft gins. Oak Taverns operates pubs including highly successful brewpub the Cross Keys in Thame, the Angel in

Bicester and the Swan in Faringdon. As at the Cross Keys, a micro-brewery may be added. XT is one of the main brewers supplying the pub, which also has a range of craft ciders. A former Greene King pub, it stands just across the road from renowned real ale pub the Shoulder of Mutton.

### Witney

#### New Inn

Following the retirement of previous tenant Martin Cornish, this Punch Taverns real ale pub is now under the same management as the Jolly Sportsman in Eynsham and the Woodman in North Leigh.

#### Oxbrew

Witney's first micro-pub will open this summer under the ownership of the brewery based in Enstone – see story on page 14.

### Appeal for info on Witney

Reader Douglas Rudlin writes: "I am researching the pubs of Witney and have managed to trace some back to 1753. I have a lot of information but more is always welcome. If any reader has any information, past or present, I would be pleased to receive it at [drudlin42@gmail.com](mailto:drudlin42@gmail.com). Thanks in advance!"

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# What's Oxbrewing?

Co-founder of Oxbrew **Simon Scamp** (with Aaron Baldwin) reflects on their first two years of endeavour, culminating in opening of a micro-pub in Witney and launch of Community Ale

**WE STARTED OXBREW** nearly two years ago now. We spent the first six months researching and then the next six months doing building work and installing the brewery equipment, with our first commercial brew day on the 1 July 2017. Our first brew was Oxbrew Amber followed by Oxbrew Red and Oxbrew Pale,

then Winterlust, a fruity dark ale for the Christmas season.

Then it was 'J. Street', a tasty porter which we produce as a cask and later nitrogenised in keg, closely followed by Citrafella, a thirst-quenching Citra-hop session ale. Of late we had a collaboration with Tap

Social to produce two beers. Bean Counter was brewed with freshly made cold brew coffee, made on site with a hint of coffee in the flavour. It Takes Two To Mango was brewed (not surprisingly) using lots and lots of mangoes added both in the boil and in the fermenting vessel.



At the same time as producing these ales we also turned to lagers, and we have two. Oxford Lager is stored for nearly four months with a deeper than usual flavour and finish, while Freudian Sip is a dark Vienna-style lager, brewed as Oxford Lager but using a rich Vienna malt. It's darker than most would think a lager should be, but it's a pukka lager and bridges the gap between ale and lager drinkers who all enjoy it equally.

We are currently working with Oxfordshire's eight community-owned pubs to develop some beer, which will be exclusively for them and may involve any keen home-brewers who might like to bring their brews to the larger scale of our brewery. Community-run pubs are a brilliant idea and we would like to see them do well – their beer should be available this summer.

Our beers have had a great reception in these early times and have sold extensively over the Oxford area and also down as far as Kent, the home of the



**BELOW LEFT:** Simon Scamp talks to Oxford branch Chairman Pete Flynn

**RIGHT:** The brewery at Enstone Airfield



micro-pub. This got us thinking – what about our own micro-pub? It's a big step to take, but after much consideration, around six months ago, we decided to take the plunge.

As with all these things we had to think long and hard to get it right. This led us to fantastic premises that had previously been a charity shop in beautiful Witney. It's in Langdale Court, just around the corner from Waitrose, with plenty of free parking.

Oxbrew-Witney will have a comfortable main bar area and a courtyard frontage, where customers will be able to sit and enjoy being in the open air. We're also hoping to put air-conditioning inside so that whatever the weather, you will be able to sit comfortably and enjoy your pint!

We intend to keep a wide selection of ales and lagers, having six keg lines and two cask lines all stocked with beer from ourselves, other local Oxfordshire breweries and maybe the odd exciting beer from further afield. We will also be stocking a great selection of bottled and canned beer, available to take home or drink in.

We belong to a collective of local brewery owners and brewers that meet on the first Wednesday of each month to discuss and drink beer (nice

work if you can get it!) We are members of this philosophical-beer-club, the Oxford Brewers Alliance, which was started by another great Oxfordshire brewery, Hook Norton. It's been a super-interesting and supportive experience being part of it. Consisting of a dozen or more breweries (Wychwood for one!), each with a like-mind and an eye on making great beer, the Oxford Brewers Alliance organises events and mini-festivals where you can go and get the best ales there are to offer in Oxfordshire.

One of our first outings as brewers was at Oxford Beer Week in 2017 with a collaboration brew called Oxford Red. Brewed with Dave Carter from Wychwood using Hook Norton brewery equipment with the expert help of Rob, it was a dark-red full-on bitter-hop beer which completely sold out. The Oxbrew-Witney micro-pub will have a mini-festival every day with different beers, as well as some tried and trusted regulars on rotation. Some of the local gins will be on offer too, plus selected wines and soft drinks.

Oxbrew-Witney will be open in August and the main thrust of the bar will be to sell really well kept local Oxfordshire beers and ales in top condition, with beautifully cooled lagers.

What can be better than that?

## Branch Diary

### Friday 17 August Beer Festival Social

5pm

Social at the Seven Stars on the Green, Marsh Baldon. Always a good do with beer in the garden, this year extended and Oxford CAMRA have been invited to open it which is why social is on Friday evening. Festival is on from Friday to Sunday.

### Wednesday 5 September Branch Meeting

7.30pm

At the Chequers, High Street, Oxford (probably upstairs). Meet beforehand for a chat at the Royal Blenheim on St Ebbes Street from 6.30pm.

### Saturday 8 September Beer Festival Social

12 noon

Get together at this fantastic Summer Beer Festival. Always a lot of beers (around 45) plus ciders. Once we have tried some, the Regional Inter-branch Aunt Sally competition should take place. Festival is on from Friday to Sunday.

# Real ale (on) the Vale Way

**Dick Bosley** puts  
back on his hiking  
boots



**THE VALE WAY** is a newish 27-mile route through Oxfordshire recently launched and mapped by the Vale of White Horse Ramblers. The route runs from Abingdon through several villages to Faringdon, with a final stretch on to Longcot. Apart from having to cross a couple of roads it is nearly all off-road and full details can be found on the ramblers' website – [www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk](http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk)

The first village reached is Sutton Courtenay, where you will find the **George & Dragon** and the **Swan** neatly bookending the church and a few cottages on the village green. The **G&D** (a quite traditional pub) normally stocks two Greene King beers and a couple of guests, which were St Austell Tribute and Timothy Taylor Landlord when I called. At the **Swan** (slightly more contemporary) there are normally two or three varying ales, which there were Sharp's Atlantic and GK Old Hoppy Hen, as I had just missed the ever popular TT Landlord. Both of these pubs were very welcoming and offered a good range of food and have nice gardens.

Walking on to Milton and the **Plum Pudding**, I won't pretend to be disappointed that my visit coincided with one of the bi-annual beer festivals held at this multi-CAMRA award winning pub. Even without the festival this is a lovely spot to sit in the sun and enjoy the normal range of four real ales and three real ciders.

If the next part of the route to Stevenston is flooded – they will normally be able to advise you at the Plum Pudding – an alternative dry route will lead you to the **Cherry Tree**, with five Wadworth beers and a guest. The actual Vale Way route takes you alongside the Ginge Brook, with the chance to see water voles and kingfishers, and along the medieval causeway to the **North Star**.

This is one of the great unspoilt pubs in England. It is Grade I listed and described in CAMRA's book *Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs* as having "one of the great village pub rooms of Britain". There are settles around an open fireplace, plenty of railway memorabilia and, again, a lovely garden. Oh yes and the three/four changing beers served through a door or hatch, rather than from a bar.

Moving on from Stevenston through fields to Ardington – see OD100 – the path can take you past the **Boar's Head** – renowned for its good food and normally with four ales available. Going past the community wood and allotments the path brings you to Wantage where there is a plethora of beers available – 38 different beers in eight pubs at the last count. I won't attempt to list them but you might find the *Good Beer Guide* helps here.

From Wantage there is a longish stretch through lovely countryside but with few pubs actually on the route. There is a

pub (the **Horse & Jockey**) in Stanford in the Vale, as well as a CAMRA award winning Social Club that allows CAMRA members entry should your timings allow a small detour.

Otherwise on reaching Faringdon you have a small hill to climb past the folly and then down into town where the first pub you pass is the aptly named **Folly**. Frankly not to call in here would be... well... folly. After 10 hot, dry miles the two ales here were very welcome – as were the substantial home-made cheese and onion rolls. Alternatively (or additionally) in the Market Place are two old coaching Inns. The **Old Crown** has a couple of beers – Old Hooky and Sharp's Doom Bar – while the **Bell** has three beers from the Wadworth's range. It is also worth noting the lovely old and unusual pub sign at the **Bell**.

A small detour will allow a visit to the **Swan**, which usually has three or four ales and hopes to restart brewing its own beers later this year. However, the actual path takes you to journey's end at the **King & Queen** at Longcot. Choosing the Sheep Dip from Plain Ales over the Ramsbury Deerstalker and Loose Cannon's Gunners Gold, I was able to sit outside the pub admiring the excellent view of the White Horse at Uffington before wondering how to get home.

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[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Keeping in touch with Oxford Branch:

Get all the latest news and events, and share information about what's happening in your area. To join send an e-mail with 'subscribe' as the subject to [events-request@oxford.camra.org.uk](mailto:events-request@oxford.camra.org.uk)

To receive copies of the *Oxford Drinker* by post, please send A5 sized, self addressed envelopes with postage to cover 100g letter to:

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## Marie Goulding

Marie Goulding, wife of Oxford CAMRA stalwart Tony Goulding, died on 12 July aged 72. She had been suffering from dementia for the last few years, but had continued to be looked after at home in Kidlington until the last few weeks of her life.

Marie was well-known to CAMRA members and to pubs and breweries throughout Oxfordshire, attending branch and regional meetings and socials, and accompanying branch minibus trips with Tony as the driver. Her funeral was held on 6 August followed by a wake at a pub where the couple were always made very welcome, hosted by Andrew and Debbie Hall at the Rose and Crown in North Oxford.

Born in Headington, Marie went to Quarry School close to what would become another favourite pub, the Mason's Arms. She worked at West's Garden Centre, married for the first time, and also worked at Debenham's and the New Theatre.

Tony and Marie met in 1992 when both were living in Kidlington, after a neighbour suggested he could help sell some models and he went to give her the proceeds. They married in 1999 in a romantic ceremony at Gretna Green, and went on many holidays together including visiting relatives in the United States.

Family was very much Marie's life as she had four children, 15 grandchildren and one great grandchild. Tony retired as an inspector at Oxford Bus Company in 2011 to look after her.

Many couples would have shrunk from a diagnosis of dementia and shut themselves away, but not Tony and Marie. Instead they confronted it and carried on, and would explain its effects to anyone who wanted to know. Everyone who saw how Tony looked after Marie could not help but be awed by his courage, dedication and love, which meant she could continue to live at home long

after most people with advanced dementia would have gone into full-time care. He demonstrated the very best of humanity.

Tony has done almost every job on the Oxford CAMRA committee since moving here in the late 1970s, and he is currently pub campaigns co-ordinator. He writes the Tony's Travels column in the *Oxford Drinker*, delivers the magazine to many pubs throughout the branch, and drives the minibus on branch pub and brewery tours.

Our thoughts go out to Tony and Marie's children by a previous marriage: Aidan, who lives with his wife in Berinsfield; Bridget, with husband Kevin in Witney; George, with partner Kath in Didcot; and Mary, with husband Andy in Witney. Donations in memory of Marie can be made at <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/make-donation>

**DAVE RICHARDSON**



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## Branch chairman **Pete Flynn** writes on why he really does... love beer!

**WE FINALLY MANAGED** to catch up with Jim Southey, founder and brewer of LoveBeer at Milton in South Oxfordshire, at the Culham Fete where he was showcasing a selection of his beers.

The reason for our visit was ostensibly to present him with an award for his beer, Bonnie Hops, being a finalist at last year's Oxford Beer Festival. The weather was gloriously hot so we had another good reason to be there as we sampled another of his regular beers, OG, in the beer tent. All beers are named after dogs.

Jim's initial efforts at brewing were not exactly ambitious, starting with a nano-kit equivalent to one half of a barrel before upgrading to a six-barrel plant in November last year. Jim brews from his home in Milton and explains that brewing on a small scale offers several advantages, such as experimentation.

"If you mess up you can afford to just throw the wort away," he explains. "This is not viable for a large brewer with critical shareholders and the like." Jim certainly has a point and this has encouraged him to supply his tasty beers to local outlets including the Plum Pudding in Milton, the Castle in Oxford, the Cricketers in Littleworth and the Bear at South Moreton.

Such is the flexibility of keeping the process small scale, that he is able to provide a pop-up brewery producing 100 litres of beer at a time.

Jim likes to focus on festivals, which he tells me have gone crazy this year. Following the success of sales, he is now producing 24 casks every two weeks from a portfolio of nine beers. His diminutive brewery is very much a family affair with his daughter Jenny being queen of the mash tun, whilst son Ben, is almost able to oversee the brewing process without supervision.

Jim is able to add value to his success via an online sales platform offering 10-litre bags plus his range of bottled beers. Another new feature is to provide "build a beer day", which is proving popular as a gift usually from partners, enabling the lucky recipient to participate in the brewing process in a very much hands-on manner.

LoveBeer is a profitable pastime for its founder, whose main vocation is in commercial property. But I gained the impression that it wasn't the right time to give up the day job just yet.



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Chris Hunter, Steve Lawrence, Jim Southey, Branch Chairman Pete Flynn (presenting the certificate to Jim), and Dave Cogdell

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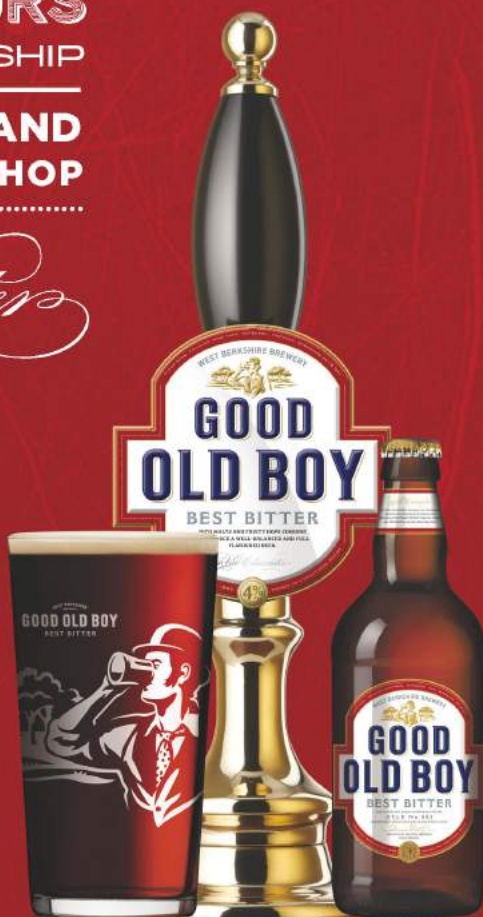
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# Festival Diary

Compiled by Richard Queralt

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

Friday 17 - Sunday 19 August  
**Seven Stars on the Green Beer Festival**  
 The Green, Marsh Baldon, nr Oxford  
 01865 343337  
[www.sevenstarsonthegreen.co.uk](http://www.sevenstarsonthegreen.co.uk)

Friday 24 - Sunday 26 August  
**Brill Festival**  
 Brill Sports & Social Club, Church Street, Brill, nr Thame  
[www.brillbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.brillbeerfestival.co.uk)

Saturday 25 August  
**Chinnor Summer Beer Festival**  
 White's Field, Mill Lane, Chinnor, nr Thame  
[www.chinnorbeerfest.org.uk](http://www.chinnorbeerfest.org.uk)

Sunday 26 August  
**Minster Lovell Beer Festival & Fun Day**  
 The Pavilion, Wash Meadow, Old Minster Lovell, Minster Lovell, nr Witney  
 10+ beers & ciders  
[www.facebook.com/events](http://www.facebook.com/events)

Friday 24 - Monday 27 August  
**The Chester Beer Festival**  
 Chester Street, Oxford  
 25+ beers & cidres  
[www.facebook.com/TheChesterOxford](http://www.facebook.com/TheChesterOxford)

Friday 31 August - Saturday 1 September  
**Windsor Craft Beer Festival**  
 Windsor & Eton Brewery, Vansittart Estate, Windsor  
[www.webrew.co.uk](http://www.webrew.co.uk)

Friday 31 August - Sunday 2 September  
**BunkFest**  
 'Wallingford's free family festival of music, dance & steam'  
 Kinecroft, Wallingford  
 30 beers & ciders

[www.bunkfest.co.uk](http://www.bunkfest.co.uk)

Saturday 1 September  
**Oxford Rabbit Hole Music Festival**  
 Victoria Arms, Mill Lane, Old Marston, Oxford  
[www.rabbitholemusicvents.co.uk](http://www.rabbitholemusicvents.co.uk)

Friday 7 - Saturday 8 September  
**Ardley with Fewcott Beer & Cider Festival**  
 Village Hall, The Playing Fields, Ardley Road, Ardley with Fewcott  
 18 beers plus 10 ciders  
[www.ardleywithfewcottvillagehall.com](http://www.ardleywithfewcottvillagehall.com)

Friday 7 - Saturday 8 September  
**The Finstock Ale**  
 Beer & folk festival  
 Village Hall & Well Hill Green, Finstock, nr Charlbury  
[www.facebook.com/TheFinstockAle](http://www.facebook.com/TheFinstockAle)

Friday 7 - Saturday 8 September  
**Moreton in Marsh Beer Festival**  
 Moreton Cricket Club, Batsford Road, Moreton in Marsh  
[www.moretoninmarshcc.co.uk](http://www.moretoninmarshcc.co.uk)

Friday 7 - Sunday 9 September  
**Headington Beer Festival**  
 Mason's Arms, Quarry School Place, Headington, Oxford  
 01865 764579  
[www.themasonsarmshq.co.uk](http://www.themasonsarmshq.co.uk)

Saturday 8 September  
**Newbury Real Ale Festival**  
 Northcroft Playing Fields, off Northcroft Lane, Newbury  
[www.newburyrealale.co.uk](http://www.newburyrealale.co.uk)

Saturday 15 September (2pm)  
**Croughton Family Beer Festival**  
 The Reading Room, High Street, Croughton  
 5 beers plus cider & perry  
[www.croughton.org.uk/cfbf](http://www.croughton.org.uk/cfbf)

Friday 21 - Sunday 23 September  
**Bletchington Beer Festival**  
 Bletchington Sports and Social Club, Oxford Road, Bletchington, nr Kidlington  
 01869 351866  
[www.bletchingtonsportsandsocialclub.com](http://www.bletchingtonsportsandsocialclub.com)

Saturday 22 September  
**Cricketers Arms Beer Festival**  
 Littleworth, nr Wheatley  
 01865 872738  
[www.cricketers-arms.co.uk](http://www.cricketers-arms.co.uk)

Saturday 22 September  
**Stonesfield Septembeerfest**  
 Stonesfield Village Hall, Field Close, Stonesfield, nr Charlbury  
 22 beers plus cider  
[www.septembeerfest.org.uk](http://www.septembeerfest.org.uk)

Saturday 29 September  
**Choko Beer Festival**  
 Laurence Hall & Gardens, Church Road, Cholsey, nr Wallingford  
[www.chokobeerfestival.org.uk](http://www.chokobeerfestival.org.uk)

Friday 5 - Saturday 6 October  
**Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival**  
 Ascot Racecourse, Ascot  
 200 beers plus 30 ciders  
[www.ascotbeerfest.org.uk](http://www.ascotbeerfest.org.uk)

Thursday 8 - Saturday 10 November  
**Oxford Beer & Cider Festival**  
 Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford  
[www.oxford.camra.org.uk](http://www.oxford.camra.org.uk)



# Brewery Focus: XT

**Pete Flynn** joins a branch visit to this popular "LocAle" provider



**THIS IS A BREWERY** with the XT factor! As if by magic the electric gates opened to admit our party of 17 to a spectacular view of the Chilterns, with rolling fields in the foreground reminiscent of a scene from the 1980s soap "Dallas".

A drive of about a mile still lay ahead of us before we reached Notley Farm, just outside Long Crendon in Buckinghamshire, home of XT Brewery. We were glad to be exiting the minibus driven by our driver Tony Goulding as it was a warm day, and we were beginning to feel a little cramped and of course thirsty!

Our host Russ Taylor was there to greet us and made us feel very welcome as we were ushered into the spacious brewing area. It seems more and more brewers are keen to use farm premises, and I was particularly impressed with this 20-barrel plant.

XT is derived from the owners' names, Gareth Xifaras and Russell Taylor. Gareth is from Birmingham and has an accountancy background, whilst Russ is an experienced brewer having cut his teeth at Windsor and Eton Brewery. Russ, a self-effacing, generous guy, told me that the pair of them used their own savings to start their venture rather than approach

financial institutions -- which speaks volumes about self-discipline.

They've been brewing since 2011, and the extant brewing kit is sourced from legendary brewery town Burton-on-Trent. Whilst the kit may be old the brewing process uses all the latest technology to regulate temperature, for example, and the process can also be monitored digitally via an iPad or similar. Unlike the town of Burton the water used in the brewing process at XT has to be conditioned first of all, by adding a combination of sulphites such as gypsum and magnesium to try and mimic the famous waters from the Trent Valley which are some of the best in the world for brewing hoppy pale ales.

When I first came into contact with XT it numbered its brews by reference to the spectrum from one to nine -- pale to dark. Latterly I have noticed XT using higher numbers to signify the year in which the beer was first introduced, such as XT13.

The XT range of core beers is joined by a subsidiary known as the Animal Brewing Co. to produce more specialist, artisanal brews. There is huge demand locally, especially where local ingredients are used in the brewing process such as English Maris Otter barley and English hops.

Russ has recently invested in new tanks and simultaneously rebranded the beer range to complement expansion of the Animal range, whilst allowing it





to brew more keg beers and diversify with new recipes; very much a theme with XT. A quick tour of an adjacent room took me to the hop storage area, and I could see that a full range of both indigenous and foreign varieties are used from the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Slovenia, and United States.

I've always admired the artwork associated with the Animal range, and Russ told me that this is the work of his wife who has a background in graphic design. There are ten people employed in the business with three full-time brewers.

XT beers can be found along the motorway corridors and his philosophy is to only distribute to outlets where you can get there and back in a day. Typically, this would include Oxford, Bristol, Birmingham and London. Russ informed me that it is a lot easier to sell his beer in Bristol than nearby Oxford, as there is so much more competition locally with the introduction of new breweries since XT started.

A few years ago XT took delivery of several oak casks for its barrel-ageing programme and the fruits of this venture were evident when I sampled XT8, a wood-aged 4.5% brew. I really enjoyed this dark brown, rich and smooth beer, offering up a sweet malty taste with hints of vanilla and liquorice. Russ told me that this is one of the beers currently available to a members' club where different special brews are offered on a monthly basis.

He invited my colleagues and I to sample some of the others on display which included: Bitter Orange Saison (4.8%), Mellow Milk Stout (4.6%), Black and

Tan (3.4%) and Dark Amber Hopped up saison (5.1%). It is quite rare to see these types of beers available in a pub, so I can understand why the beer club is very popular and offers XT an opportunity to expand the beer range and establish which ones are most popular through regular tastings.

XT is very fortunate in being one of a select few breweries to have been given the chance to make a beer with two new varieties of hops from the Charles Faram hop development programme. This is down to the innovative and pioneering effort of Russ who has stated that it was a "major thrill" to be able to brew with the new varieties.

There are two main thrusts behind the idea, the first being to breed varieties which can reportedly withstand pests and diseases. The second concerns the hop varieties from the US, Australia and New Zealand, with those big punchy flavours which are hugely popular with beer drinkers. If the breeding programme can bring forth a British answer to hops like that, then it would be a game changer for everyone who drinks, makes or sells beer. The demand for these tropical tasting hops is huge, and the price has risen threefold in the last year.

Well, it was time for us to go and reflect on what had been an enjoyable, informative and interesting afternoon. XT is expanding rapidly which is a testament to its success, and it was thanks all round to Russ and his team for making our visit so enjoyable.

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  
Broad Face  
Kings Head & Bell  
Nags Head on the Thames  
Narrows \*  
White Horse

### **Oxford**

Britannia, Headington  
Castle Tavern  
Chequers, High Street  
Four Candles \*  
Rose and Crown  
Swan and Castle \*  
William Morris, Cowley \*

### **Witney**

Company of Weavers \*

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.

# Pete's Pubs

Branch chairman **Pete Flynn** way out west to Carterton

## "A RETURN TO CARTERTON?"

repeated the driver rhetorically, as I boarded the S1 bus outside Pint Shop in George Street, Oxford. "Not many ask for a return you know." Fleeting, and chuckling to myself, I was reminded of the immortal line from the Eagles song, Hotel California: "You can check out anytime but you can never leave."

An hour later I arrived at my destination with my eyes having to adjust to the bright sunlight

as I strode across the road to my first call. It's a fact that all three pubs in the town are within five-minute walk of the bus terminus, so it wouldn't take me long to complete my visit.

The **Golden Eagle** is a sprawling Greene King (GK) pub directly opposite and caters for the sports bar fraternity with four large TVs and myriad flags adorning the walls adding a touch of World Cup colour to an otherwise typical GK venue. Three GK beers were available:

Old Speckled Hen, IPA and Abbot Ale, plus a guest beer which was Arkell's Moonlight. I'm not a big fan of Arkell's beers as, in my opinion, they seem to lack flavour and are uninteresting. Notwithstanding I opted for Moonlight and, having downed my half pint, I quickly left as there was no-one willing to talk to me.

A two minute walk took me to my next stop, the **Beehive**. I was made to feel very welcome in this friendly pub which has three separate areas including a lounge, sports bar and restaurant to cater for most customer requirements. Steve and Sally Patterson have been tenants of this Wadworth establishment for 27 years, which has to be a record for West Oxfordshire. Prior to that they used to run The Folly Bridge, Oxford. Three real ales from Wadworth were available: IPA, 6X, and Studs Up, the latter being a seasonal beer.

I chose 6X which, rather unusually, was served from an electric hand pull known as Freeflow. The Freeflow Beer Dispense System concept is very simple. You open the beer tap on the bar and ambient temperature beer comes out into the customer's glass. The beer tap is either ON or OFF -- not like a tap on your bath at home where you can make the water come out fast, slow or anywhere in between.

Electric Pump Assisted Freeflow has an electric pump (think Rolls Royce engine!)



which offers consistency, with the exact measurement of beer dispensed by calibration unlike the traditional hand pump method where the accuracy of a measure is determined by your server. Nevertheless I have to admit to preferring the hand pump method as you would expect to get a creamier head on your beer. For this reason it seems that the Freeflow pumps were never popular "up north", where there remains a predilection for a frothy brew. It wasn't until later that I realised that they have three hand pumps in the sport bar section of the pub; how did I miss that?

I spent some time speaking to Naomi Edwards who has worked here for about eight years, and she told me that this Wadworth establishment of thirty years' standing sometimes has the occasional guest beer. A range of Wadworth bottled beers are available to include Horizon, Bishop's Tipple, Old Timer and Swordfish.

The pub, which employs about 12 staff, is very popular with both locals and off-base staff from RAF Brize Norton, focussing on providing freshly cooked meals to include a breakfast menu as well as the usual lunchtime and evening meals. Being so close to the base the noise emanating from aircraft as they take off can be quite deafening but you do get used to it, Naomi told me.

Having thanked her for her time I walked all of two minutes to my last destination, the **Siege**

of **Orleans**. I was saving the best until last as I had visited the "**Siege**" on two previous occasions, and I had that visceral feeling in knowing that I was about to enjoy some unusual beers rather than the ubiquitous GK offerings.

I was not to be disappointed as there were four real ales available and one cider to include Animal Raccoon, (brewed by XT), Yeovil Ales' Stout Headed, Heritage Brewing's Sole Survivor, and Island Brewery's Yachtsman's Ale.

Once more I was made to feel very welcome by highly personable Su Osborn, deputy manager of this outstanding micro-pub which is one of only a few in Oxfordshire. It opened about three years ago and is owned by Chris Jones, manager of the Cotswold Inn, Burford. What makes this pub so special is the commitment to making the customer feel at home and known by name, making them want to return time and time again.

Interestingly, Martyn Hillier – who founded the micro-pub movement – believes this simple concept to be the most important in adding value and maintaining customer loyalty. It goes without saying that the beer has to be tip-top and I wasn't disappointed as I ordered Yeovil Ales' Stout Headed, a smooth, dark beer bursting with full bodied rich roast flavours; the maltiness is balanced by a late hopping

style, achieving a truly special stout.

Su told me that in February the **Siege** introduced Graffiti Street Food with a weekly changing menu which is proving popular with locals and the RAF contingent alike. This upstairs restaurant can cater for 30 people and is a welcome change by comparison to some lifeless, prosaic local pubs with their never changing dull menu offerings.

The **Siege** also has its own football team, is dog friendly and is very big on social media where it may be contacted on Facebook (SoOAlehouse) and on Instagram (Sooalehouse) to be kept up to date with all that's happening.

After sampling Sole Survivor and Yachtsman's ales I said goodbye to Su, promising to spread the word about the pub. Maybe a return ticket to Carterton will become the norm for the S1 bus drivers if my mission is successful!



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Title ..... Surname .....	Single Membership £25 <input type="checkbox"/>	£27 <input type="checkbox"/>
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Address .....	(Partner at the same address)	
..... Postcode .....		
Email address .....	*For information on Young Member and other concessionary rates please visit <a href="http://www.camra.org.uk/membership-rates">www.camra.org.uk/membership-rates</a> or call 01727 798440.	
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# Brewery News

## Church Hanbrewery

Its fruit beers went down well at the Ealing festival in London, where they were brewed especially for the festival and put into casks for the first time. More fruit beers will be brewed but only on request, as they need to be super fresh.

## LAM/Tap Social

LAM owner Kurt Moxley is no longer brewing on the site in Kennington, near Oxford, but Tap Social Movement is brewing beer on this site as well as its existing site in Botley. The Kennington brewery is a 2300L state-of-the-art facility which will be opening for brewery tours and tasting sessions in the coming months. Tap's brewing capacity is now 18BBL across the two sites, a major increase.

## Loddon

It has transformed the current office and shop into a taproom with a view to launching this by July. It will have three lines of Loddon, one rotating craft beer and a huge range of bottles and ciders in the fridge. The revamped shop will have a much bigger range of great local products, from honey to gin, and it will be hosting many new events/open evenings over the coming months.

Summer Snowflake, Loddon's seasonal golden beer, is now available throughout the summer. A pale golden ale with a bright white head, Summer Snowflake is generously hopped with Brewers Gold and is a perfect session strength at 4.1%.

## Vale/ABC

April saw the grand opening of the long awaited new taproom which is now serving on Fridays 12-6pm, and Saturdays from 12-5pm. Regular brewery tours run again this summer so check out the Vale website for more information: [www.valebrewery.co.uk](http://www.valebrewery.co.uk).



Red Card (4%) is a seasonal ruby red ale with subtle spicy hop flavours celebrating the festival of sport happening over the summer, while Under the Boat (4.5%) is a deep golden IPA. Vale is also producing its first craft keg beers, the first two offerings being Kölner Dom, a pale golden Kölsch-style ale; and a big bold west coast American IPA, Big Sur.

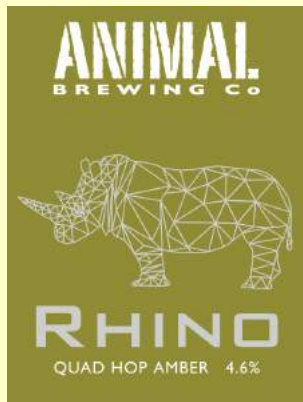
Aylesbury Brew House (ABC) has released its first craft keg beer, No.1, an amber, hazy, unfiltered and unfinned West Coast IPA. It is also continuing to produce interesting single batch limited edition beers in cask with the summer range to

include Blood Moon (4.5% American Red Ale); Wolf (3.7% Golden Ale); and Uncertainty (4.8% Session IPA).

## XT

In August XT will be back at the Great British Beer Festival in Olympia, London with its own brewery bar to showcase the core range of XT and Animal beers plus a number of special one-off brews. Having seen the success of the foreign bars at last year's show, XT is keen to prove that British brewers can easily match the competition.

The latest beers, which will also be available at Olympia, are Burton IPA which is a proper old school IPA, brewed strong at 7.1%; Animal Rhino, a quod hop amber ale; and a collaboration Red -Siamese Fighting Fish (4.6%), brewed with a leading malt supplier who joined in the brewing process. Hop Kitty's very naughty cousin, the one with bigger muscles, is the feral Evil Kitty at 7.2%, available to a limited number of pubs and at GBBF.



# Gardeners' World

**Paul Silcock,**  
landlord of the  
Gardeners Arms in  
Plantation Road, North  
Oxford, continues his  
regular column

**EVERYBODY AT SCHOOL**, or at the gym, had a mate who was stronger than everyone else, seemingly able to lift things which no-one else could lift.

Last year nearly 750 pubs closed.

Those two sentences are completely unrelated but I just wanted to remind you about the first thing, before talking more about the second, because I'm going to use a metaphor later which will be completely wasted unless you've remembered

about strong people. (Hey, for all I know you're all down the gym, like me, sweating off the beers and doing back squats next to Big Tom. Remember that name, he'll be mentioned again later as well).

But back to that second, and somewhat troubling sentence. Nearly 750 pubs closed last year. That's very nearly two a day. And with only 50,000 pubs operating in the UK that's a very worrying number. If it continues like this in less than 70 years there will be no pubs left in Britain. None! That's a very low number.

I've banged on about why this is happening before, and almost



certainly will again. Like now. Rising gas and electricity bills, business rates, an increase in the cost of beer that can't be passed on to the customer so eats into the base profit margins. Brexit: It's made trade deals with the EU rather shaky and that's gonna start to change the price of a barrel of continental lager. I know all of you are real ale aficionados but other people do drink lager and therefore we need to stock it.

Even the hot summer weather is having a fair go at making things harder, with poor crop yields in vineyards across Europe due to poor growing conditions to be reflected in the price of wine. Sky! That money grabbing Murdoch and his sky-high prices for showing the sport in a public house.

These facts aren't going to change any time soon, so pubs are going to keep closing. But others will open, very often on the same site as the pub that closed. And some of these pubs are going to close, for all the same reasons mentioned above.

But some of these pubs are going to close for another, not often discussed reason. Because they just got the business model wrong. They had a bad idea. It's all well and good deciding you're going to plough your own furrow and turn the old Coach and Horses into the next destination gastro-pub, but if you're head chef is the kind of experimental

culinary genius who believes in serving fillet steak in raspberry sauce with rhubarb and chocolate popcorn, you're going to go out of business pretty quickly.

Just taken over the lease on what used to be a sports pub? Don't try turning it into a pop-up cocktail bar serving gin slings in Tupperware beakers and expect to see huge profits overnight. It takes time to change the reputation of a pub, and time for a new venture to sink into the local consciousness.

So what this got to do with having a strong mate, as I started this article with many words ago? Because one of the unspoken reasons some pubs close is that people see an idea somewhere and try it themselves without thinking about whether or not it's a good idea. Which is like looking over at what someone else is lifting in the gym, in this case let's say Big Tom, and mindlessly trying to lift what they are lifting.

Tom can squat a very impressive 190kg. Want to know how much 190kg actually is? It's probably at least twice as much as you can lift. If I tried that I'd break both my legs and probably my back. Yes, pubs are facing a hard time, but when panicky articles start shouting numbers just remember that sometimes the biggest problem a pub can face is from a bad idea at the centre of it.

## Morse Bitter

White Horse member Dick Bosley is asking if any reader can remember Morse Bitter, who made it and when? Any information would be gratefully received at [rbosley@talktalk.net](mailto:rbosley@talktalk.net)







# THE BEAR INN

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



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



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



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



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