

Issue 117
Winter 2022 - 2023

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Welcome

..... to good news at a time of major challenges for the trade

The **Oxford Drinker** is the newsletter of the Oxford branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

4000 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs across the branch's area, including Oxford, Abingdon, Witney, Eynsham, Kidlington, Bampton and Wheatley and and most of the villages in between.

PDF downloads of past issues are available at the Oxford CAMRA website, www.oxford.camra.org.uk.

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THIS IS THE second printed edition of the *Oxford Drinker* since the long interruption caused by Covid, and a lot has happened since our last edition came out in September. If you keep up-to-date with the *Oxford Drinker* online then you'll know that the Lamb & Flag in Oxford city centre has re-opened at last, and that we held a successful Oxford Beer and Cider Festival in October although the number attending fell short of expectations.

But if you don't read us online, don't worry as this edition is packed with news, features and – a rarity for CAMRA magazines – guest writers from the sharp end of the pubs and brewing business. Many of the articles in this edition can be read here first, before they go online, so always look out for it in pubs with the next edition due to appear in March.

The pub and brewing industry, through its various organisations, continues to put out a very gloomy view of the coming months, which undoubtedly will be tough especially in the New Year, with January and February being traditionally the quietest times of the year. This is when pubs and local breweries need you most, so please get out and about and support them however you can. The energy crisis and squeeze on consumer spending will undoubtedly lead to casualties, but their resilience and sheer bloody-minded determination to carry on shouldn't be underestimated. We can expect some

pubs to restrict opening hours in the New Year and maybe write off Tuesdays as well as Mondays, and some may close for longer. But we're confident the majority will survive.

Oxford CAMRA has started to recognise the sometimes unsung heroes of our business by presenting long service awards, first to the Meeson family at the Masons Arms after notching up 25 years at the pub; and more recently to David and Jenny Rhymes at the Gardeners Arms in North Parade Avenue, who retired in November after nearly 30 years here (see story in this edition).

David and Jenny hadn't employed anyone for over 10 years and hadn't had a holiday for 18 years, and as they opened seven days a week for both drinks and food you can imagine the long hours they put in. It reminded me of a CAMRA survey a few years ago showing that most pub tenants, when calculating their profits for the total hours worked, earned less than the minimum wage. Things have got a lot tougher since that survey so they deserve a long and happy retirement!

We have more long service awards planned, but if you know of anyone who has worked at a pub or brewery for at least 20-25 years, let me know: editor@oxford.camra.org.uk. Keep up to date with what's happening by following the link below, and enjoy this magazine in the meantime.

DAVE RICHARDSON

For regular updates visit
www.oxforddrinker.camra.org.uk



Not a mystery but still magical

Graham Shelton reflects on a branch minibus tour of Community-Owned pubs



IT'S A FACT! None of us is getting any younger, and many of us can well remember those wonderful, pungent days of 1967 when on Boxing Day of that year the Beatles released their third film: *Magical Mystery Tour*. Quite where the magical experiences sprang from is a matter for debate (but not very much).....

On the other hand, there is no doubt where the magic comes from at all 10 of our lovely Oxfordshire Community-Owned pubs, and it was my privilege to be on Tony Goulding's Magical Bus which managed to visit seven in a single day.



Having had the fun, the stress, the cost and the work of helping to set up the **Red Lion, Northmoor** as a community pub nine years ago, I thought you might like a couple of brief reflections on this excellent tour. First, it's clear that the Community-Owned formula works and can breathe new life into a pub that otherwise would have closed. In the 10 or so years that the concept has been tried in Oxfordshire, all of those pubs are still running, albeit that one, the **Plough, Great Haseley**, has become a very good restaurant rather than a drinks-led operation.



FAR LEFT: Liz Taylor at the Ampleforth; The Bull at Great Milton

THIS PAGE: The Crown at South Moreton, and the Ampleforth

We didn't manage to visit the **Seven Stars** in Marsh Baldon on this trip, but this ranks as the first pub in Oxfordshire to become Community-Owned in 2013. It's still good, still Community-Owned and still going, though now under the management of a small pubs chain.

In every case, the motivation for attempting the community ownership route is to keep a thriving pub in the community at a point where it might otherwise be lost. That was certainly the case at the "Amp" (the **Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**, which we *were* able to visit. The community owns a lease on the building, rather than the building itself, and it was great to see it looking fine and massively improved since they have taken it in hand. Good beer too. The lease is coming up for renewal and I hope all will go well now that the principle is firmly established of that pub being open as a focus for community activities as well as a great place to eat and drink.

The **Bull Inn, Great Milton** is another long-standing Community-Owned pub: small but perfectly formed. It shows what a tiny pub can do in a rural community and still stay viable.

The **Crown, South Moreton** is now a huge success under Di Humphrey's energetic management: busy and warm with a good food offering and great beer on tap. So happy to see it awarded 2022 Pub of the Year by the South Oxfordshire CAMRA branch. With colleague Katy from the original ownership team, they have made their own success.

One of the joys of an Oxford CAMRA minibus tour, of course, is Tony's wonderful and compendious knowledge of country byways, really needed as so many of these pubs are a bit off the beaten track. It was certainly worth the trip to the **Plough, West Hanney**. This has seen quite a few changes of operator since it became a Community-Owned pub, but now things feel good and settled with Mine Host Owain

Jones jovially presiding over the bar and Luke Mayor doing well in the kitchen.

The **Red Lion, Northmoor**, my local and my favourite, is one of the longest-standing Community-Owned pubs in Oxfordshire and the only one to have retained its tenants, Lisa and Ian Neale, throughout its community ownership. They are now joined by their daughter Molly, born into the village and already going to the local school, Benny the dog and a splendid collection of chickens in the vegetable garden. It's a bit of a destination pub these days, as a result of Ian's top food offering, but rightly retains its place in the *Good Beer Guide* for consistently well-kept local real ales.

Our tour became more magical as we went (we *had* drunk quite a few pints by then) and took in two more pubs well worth visiting: the **White House, Bladon** and the **White Hart, Wolvercote**. The **White House**, like so many, had a few ups and downs but is doing well now ►

TOP TO BOTTOM:

The Plough, West Hanney;
Roger Manion, landlady of the
Crown, South Moreton, Di
Humphrey and Ash Johnson of
community committee; The
White Hart at Wolvercote; The
Red Lion at Northmoor



after a change of tenant and was very busy when we were there. The **White Hart** was also buzzing and shows what a community-centred beer drinkers' pub can achieve (in this case under Amanda Jones's good management) even in the teeth of another, more food-orientated pub literally next door. It benefits massively from strong community support led by Matt Todd and his team.

On this occasion we didn't visit the newly-reopened **Lamb & Flag** in St Giles, Oxford, but I don't doubt that we will. The last time I was there it was thronging with students again, and it will give the currently closed, but just back on the market, **Eagle and Child** a good run for its money.

The community ownership group leasing the **Lamb & Flag** style themselves "The Inklings" after the authors' group of the same name who used to meet there. Latest news is that there would be an Inklings-only event in the front room of the pub, on

November 22 when they will host Ed Balls and George Osborne for a discussion about the future of the UK. Sounds like a discussion in the best Oxford tradition: fun, beer-fuelled but unlikely to change the world.

There was one other Oxfordshire community-owned pub that we didn't get to visit this time and that is the **Abingdon Arms, Beckley**. It's one of the best, drawing in locals as well as visitors with its lovely food and top ales. It would be a magical way to end our next pub tour.

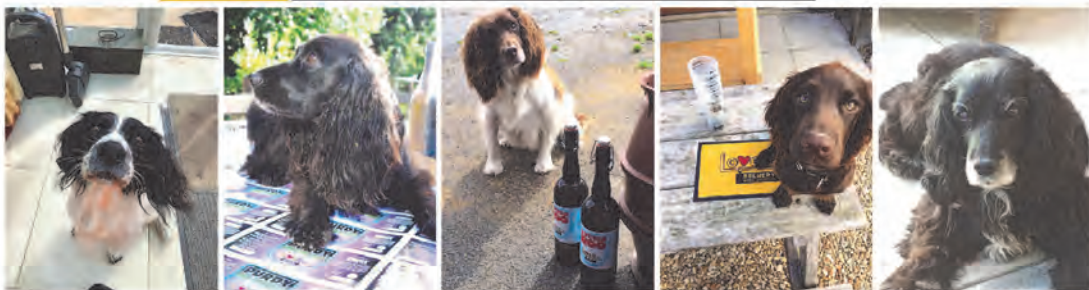
And then, of course, there's the ongoing campaign to secure a community buy-out of the **White Horse, Stonesfield**, a village near Woodstock. We trust the villagers will be successful in persuading the private owner to sell to them (it's their second attempt), as the success of the existing 10 Community-Owned pubs in the county indicates that this could once again be a thriving village hub.





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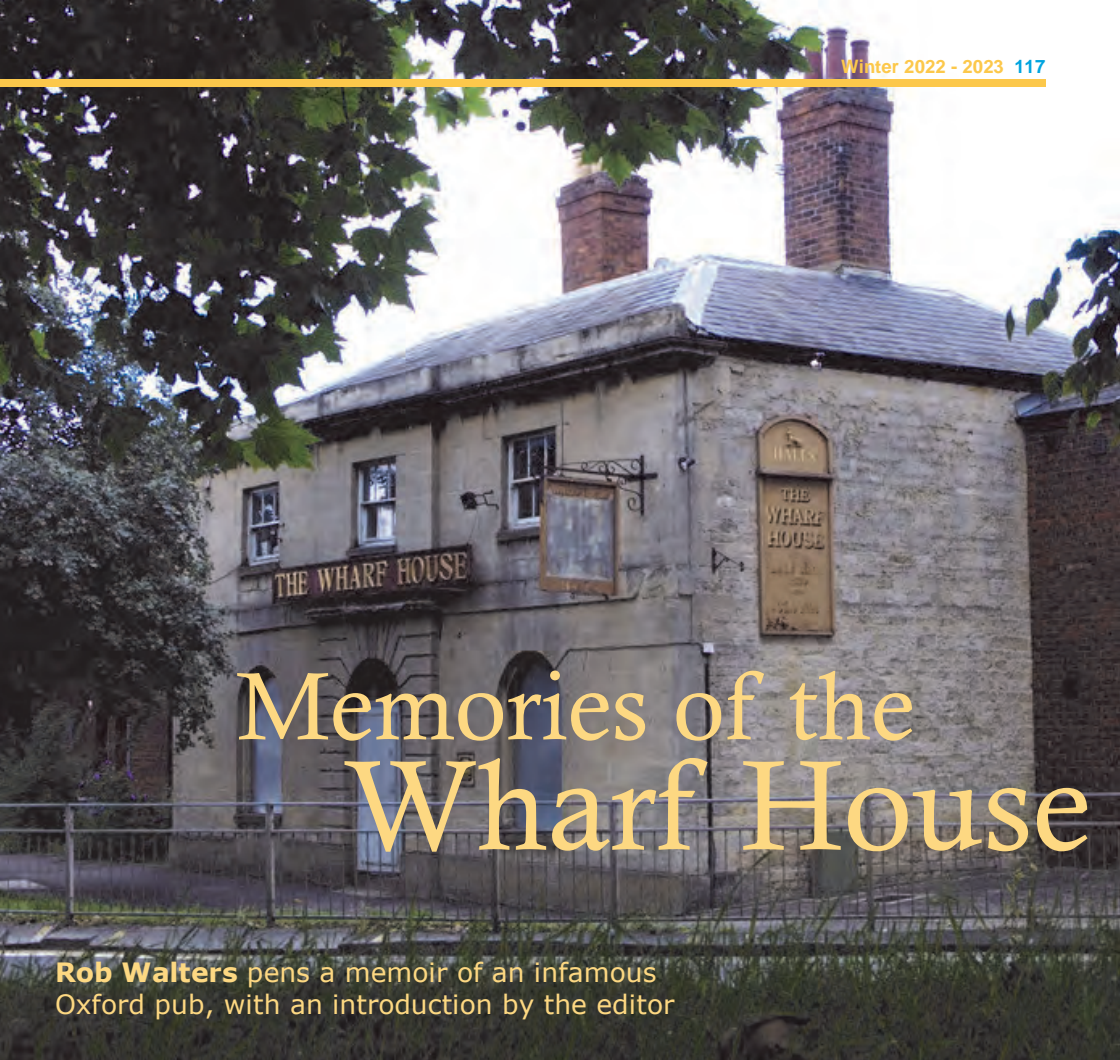
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Memories of the Wharf House

Rob Walters pens a memoir of an infamous Oxford pub, with an introduction by the editor

I only went in there once, although I must have driven past it thousands of times on my way along Oxpens Road towards Folly Bridge. My abiding memory, having gone in with two friends, is of a really run-down pub where the locals eyed strangers with all the suspicion of a Wild West saloon.

Rob paints a portrait of the Wharf House below, but the facts are fairly straightforward. Once part of the inner suburb of

St Ebbe's, which was all but swept away by redevelopment in the 1960s, it was built around 1830 and took its name from a previous pub on the river bank nearby. Once a Halls pub, it was run latterly as a free house by Tony Flatman and Simon Hosking, concentrating on real ales. The modernised building survives as a rather posh holiday let surrounded by modern development, but we wonder if visitors staying here are ever troubled by ghosts?

Here then are Rob's "Reminiscences of the Wharf House....."

There once was a pub in Oxford called the Wharf House, at the fork of Thames Street and Speedwell Street. It was a place which has gained almost mythical reverence from fans since it closed. It ceased to be a pub in 2006 much to the chagrin of many real ale drinkers and the despair of its true regulars: the down and outs of the area. There are many tales about the

LEFT: The pub in 2007, courtesy Steve Wheeler/Oxford Mail

BELOW: The pub in 2022.

place, but one that captures the ambience has Tony Flatman, the last landlord, calling time, then, when no-one left, crying, "Haven't you lot got homes to go to?" This was usually met with a resounding "No".

Tony is probably one of the few landlords to leave their own pub through the front window. I was not present at the event, but was told of it many times. Apparently there was a take-over bid one night. Some of the more enterprising regulars became drunker than usual, probably one of the regular celebrations when one of them gained that much sought government hand-out: the Disability Living Allowance. In their exuberance they took over the bar and in response to Tony's not unreasonable objections, they threw him out. Yes, through the window! It remained boarded up for many months.

Few pubs have songs written about them, but I am proud to say that I have a friend who did just that for the Wharf. It's called The Gentleman's Bar and you can hear the composer Pete Madams singing it here: <https://vedapark.bandcamp.com/track/gentlemens-bar>

My own instincts are toward the written word rather than music, and I think the following cropped and edited piece about my last night at this dubious boozier may capture a little of the ambience of the characterful place. Names are changed to protect the guilty.

On entering the pub I admit to myself that it did smell, just a

little. An indefinable smell, slightly unpleasant, but not retchingly so, and certainly not enough to put you off your beer. And then there are the flies. Some regulars claim that they are of a unique species -- diptera wharfhouse perhaps. This is possible. Unlike other flies they are not seasonal. Their numbers seem constant throughout the year. It is probable that they live on spilt beer. They are lugubrious in flight and easily caught by a gradually extended shaking hand. This, it seems, maintains a strange balance, as there are always about the same number present.

Tonight there is a stool at some distance from the bar, near to the entrance door. On it slumps a small figure, comatose or sleeping, arms folded and chin buried deeply in his chest. Blue denim jeans plainly display an accident: an inability to alight from the stool and visit the nearby toilet perhaps.

"He's pissed himself again," states Dick indelicately, but not unkindly. Dick is a regular; he sees all and comments on all. He completes his observation by saying, "Silly sod."

Tony gets me a beer. He knows what I like and makes a selection from his constantly changing selection of real ales. He vanishes into the backroom which serves as a cellar. There are hand pumps on the bar, but they are a mere decoration and I have never seen them used. Here the beer is dispensed straight from the barrel, as it saves cleaning the pipes.

I am standing, rather uncomfortably, between Dick and the stooled figure, let's call him Nigel. Nigel is relatively young, relative that is to an average age in this place which fluctuates rapidly and accelerates alarmingly. There may be something in the air that causes rapid ageing. I notice that Nigel's head is bleeding. ▶



Not a lot, but a definite trickle. On my left Dick is being categorical. As usual he is making some claim about a musical attribution. I am not really listening, and his real target is behind the bar rather than in front of it – Tony. On my right, Nigel is wobbling dangerously on the stool. If he falls he will fall at my feet or on my feet and, as usual, I am wearing sandals. Dick is exasperated, angry; flecks of spittle appear at the corner of his mouth. “Tell him, Rob,” he entreats me, “tell him that it was Mick Soper that played drums with the Skints in their 1963 recording of Love Lights,” or something to that effect. Bravely I confess that I have never heard of the Skints, which draws Dick’s fire and exasperation towards me. He looks my way in disbelief; it as if I had said that I had not heard of the Beatles!

Fortunately Nigel provides a diversion by falling off the stool. It is an impressive dive – head first from a three-foot bar stool. His head hits the wooden floor with a horrifying sound. A dull thud accompanied by a crack as if something, floor or head, has broken. He rolls over. I am grateful that he managed to avoid my feet, though I rather doubt that he is capable of choices. I am concerned that he might now be dead or injured, yet am frozen to the spot.

Someone of a more sympathetic nature decides that Nigel should be put back on the stool. It is not an easy task. He has rolled himself into a pain-racked ball and wants to stay that way. The kind helper is also trying to avoid contact with the urine soaked bottom half of

Nigel – which is difficult. Each attempt to re-sit the little man causes the bar stool to topple over. At last someone courageously grabs his feet and he is re-installed on his precarious and dangerous perch. Quite why, I do not know. However, he looks much the same and all is in order.

Tony has consulted a hefty manual held always in readiness behind the bar, and reads a section aloud. It offers clear proof that it was not Mick Soper who played drums with the Skints in 1963. Dick then disputes the veracity of the book and it is now Tony’s turn to look exasperated.

However, his attention is deflected by a middle-aged woman, a member of the homeless contingent who gather at the tables most distant from the bar. She has taken it into her head to clean the place up. She is emptying ashtrays and collecting litter. Tony is perplexed and asks her what has stimulated this need to clean. After all, it is not that usual to see women in the Wharf – and most unusual to see one who is in the least concerned about cleanliness. She smiles vaguely and stumbles on in her self-appointed role. Her name is Annie.

I am then joined by Phil, who kindly places himself between Nigel’s stool and me. But he is obviously concerned about the wobbly man and moves off to talk to Tony at a more distant part of the bar. I am hoping that he will make Tony laugh. This is always a great event and certainly part of the Wharf’s entertainment; he has a very

loud and unique laugh. Phil is replaced by Phillip. He’s a much sturdier fellow who more than adequately fills the dangerous space to my right, but whose presence seems to destabilise Nigel who performs another full scale nose-dive. Phillip endeavours to restore Nigel to his perch, but he is no more successful than the previous good soul and is blissfully unaware of the urine soaked nether regions. However, with help, Nigel is once again established on the stool, preparatory to the next dive.

Meanwhile Annie has returned, presumably having completed her tasks as self-appointed cleaner and now feeling she must administer to the needs of Nigel. But there is little reward in administering to the wounded comatose, who doesn’t respond to her kind words at all. Fast losing interest she gives him an undeserved hug, then uses his immobility to launch herself back towards the homeless section of the Wharf.

As in a space capsule where there is a reaction to every action, Nigel falls off his perch again, another nose-dive. This time the dive is sourced in an act of charity by a tipsy woman – but the result is just the same, another knock on the head for Nigel. Perhaps everyone has begun to tire of this cycle, perhaps Nigel has exhausted the bar of its kindly persons. In any event no-one rushes to replace him on the stool. He is left lying next to the bar, his knees raised to his chest, his arm over his face. I think that he is safer there; he is now as low as he can get.

ROB WALTERS

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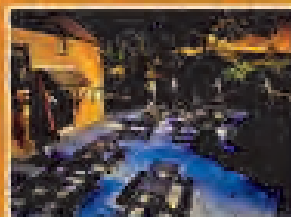
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The Day of Judgement

Graham Shelton on his experience at the Oxford Beer and Cider Festival

I WONDER HOW you envisage the Day of Judgement. Flights of Angels, perhaps, naked cherubs playing celestial harps, burnished golden thrones, St Peter and his pals and, of course, the Regimental Band of the Grenadier Guards?

Not wishing to be disrespectful, but I did have a rather good day at this year's Oxford Beer and Cider Festival! It was surprising what heavenly sensations a sampling afternoon with 120 beers, 30 ciders and a lot of good friends can evoke in the hallowed surroundings of Oxford Town Hall. It made me realise, of course, just what an important part beer (and friendship) must play in heaven.

Like everyone in the room, I always work my way round as far as I can, judging beers and marking my card as I go. The quest, in my case, is for that really toothsome local brew that I can recommend to Lisa for the bar at the Red Lion Northmoor and which, of course, I'd really like to drink myself.

This year's festival was particularly good because Pete Flynn asked if I'd like to be a proper Beer Judge and do it officially as a member of the judging panel. What a privilege! Thank you, Pete! My day out truly was to be the Day of Judgement!

Up on the stage were three tables each of six judges. On every table were six anonymised samples in sealed containers representing the very best of the local beers on offer. In Round 1 each table had to choose two out of six to go forward to the Final Round. And in that Final Round we had to narrow them down to the top three. By now you'll know that Yabba Dabba Doo from Little Ox was the clear champion, with worthy runners-up from Bicester Brewery and White Horse.

I thought we'd have a greater showing from some of the heavier porters on offer, as they are such winter favourites, but there was remarkable consistency in the scoring from the judges, male and female, young and old, experts and amateurs, so the top three choices definitely were the top three.

As you would hope and expect, we took it very seriously, separately scoring key parameters such as colour, aroma, flavour and aftertaste. For me, though, one of the main things is whether I'd like to order a second pint. That really does sort them out, and it's amazing how things like aftertaste can affect that.

By way of research ahead of the day I had a look online at

the various beer scoring methods around the world, and was very struck by an American scoresheet which included sensible things like Aroma, Appearance, "Flavor", Mouthfeel and Overall Impression, with lots of space to write descriptive comments. Along the side of the form were "Descriptor Definitions" ranging from "Acetaldehyde" (green apple-like aroma and flavor) to "Yeasty" (a bready, sulfury or yeast-like aroma or flavor). It all looked fairly sensible, then I spotted one in the middle which was "Light-Struck" (similar to the flavor of a skunk). Happily we didn't have any of those!

All-in-all it was a great day out, amazing value and a wonderful annual milestone. Thank you to everyone involved in every stage. Operating on this scale is no mean feat and clearly the result of colossal effort including choosing a veritable panoply of beers and ciders from many excellent brewers, as well as from distinguished participants from further afield, setting everything up, operating on the day and clearing up afterwards. All those massive and personal volunteer efforts are hugely appreciated. No wonder so many hundreds of CAMRA members and others flock to the event every year.

It's a heavenly experience.

Gardeners' World

Paul Silcock, of the Gardeners Arms, Plantation Road, Oxford on pub quizzes

LET ME ASK you a question: Do you like pub quizzes? (If you like you can read that last sentence in Ghostface's voice from the Scream movies, but it won't make any particular difference to this article.)

Pub quizzes really divide opinion. We have regulars who will desperately stay away from the pub on a Sunday night to avoid our quiz. We also have a host of regular faces we only see on a Sunday night. Because of the quiz. But as much as pub quizzes divide opinion, they also create something. At least if they're done well.

There was a pub round my way back in Sheffield that held a quiz every Tuesday night. It consisted of the surly landlord charging you 50p each, dropping your answer sheet in a puddle of beer on your table, and then pinning an A4 sheet of questions to the blackboard by the bar. An hour later he'd rip the sheet of questions down and pin up the sheet of answers. Thrilling it was not. But that's not the sort of quiz I'm talking about. I'm talking about a proper, well run quiz. They can build something great, but I'll come to that nearer the end of this column.

It's not impossible for a busy pub to sometimes get a little faceless. Despite best efforts it's easily possible for a customer to become a bit of a cog in a piece of machinery. After all, how much interaction

is necessary to order a pint? CAMRA members can easily talk for half an hour while ordering a pint, discussing everything from the original gravity to how much better that particular pint used to taste before the independent brewery was bought out by Greene King/ Carlsberg/Molson Coors (delete as appropriate), which is certainly true. But for most people, it's a very simple point-and-pay transaction, and that doesn't always build a connection. A pub quiz can break down some of that. People feel they're having more interaction, the quiz master becomes a point of focus, and if you're not into watching sport, a quiz can work as a similar communal experience.

We've been running a pub quiz on a Sunday night at the Gardeners Arms for the last (checks calendar) 18 years now. It's changed, evolved and eventually mutated into the strange beast that it is now in that time. I'll give you an example of its strangeness. Over the years the Quiz Master (to give him

his actual title, notice the capital letters there) has created a couple of songs to introduce the occasional quiz round. And in response to this, certain teams have developed heckles to the songs. Which over the years has seemed reasonably normal to us. However, one new quizzer who had been brought along by an experienced team, and having suffered through a particular rowdy crowd sing-along to the Chain Letters Round theme song, uttered the terrified, "It's a f*cking cult!" And promptly left.

As an example of a communal experience, maybe that story doesn't really help my cause, I admit. But for the others in the pub they felt part of something, even if that something could be seen as a cult by some people.

So as a better example of how a pub quiz can build and maintain this sense of community, we even took the quiz online during the pandemic. Just me and the Quiz Master in an otherwise



Festival success

Event held on October 20-21 at Town Hall was the first since 2019

empty pub broadcasting the quiz live, every Sunday, during lockdown. Partly to give us something to do, but mainly because there was an audience of pub regulars who could, for a couple of hours a week, tune into our irregular nonsense and feel connected to something again. At times we had more teams taking part in a lockdown quiz than we could have fitted in the pub. I'll be honest, I'm rather proud of that.

I know this can all sound like an advert for our pub quiz (every Sunday, 8.30pm sharp!), but it's not. It's about that thing that I was talking about waaaayyy back at the start of this article, that ability for a good quiz to create something great, that should be at the heart of pubs. This is where I use the C word again.

Community. Which is one of the best things a pub can create.

Although the festival was enjoyed by most people and voted a major success in Facebook posts, and the general feedback was that the range of beer and cider lived up to expectations, attendance was well down on previous years with about 1,750 coming through the door.

This was well short of the 2,500 expected, and there was no Saturday opening this year to keep down costs. Some beers had sold out prior to closing time on Friday, but there was much wastage of beer and cider as the hard work began of taking down the bars and stillage.

Reasons for the decline are hard to be certain about, but lingering fears over Covid was certainly a factor with a noticeable lack of older people and fewer CAMRA members than expected. Consumption was hit by the non-availability of pint glasses, with only half pints available from CAMRA's official

supplier Festival Glass

Oxford CAMRA laid on 120 real ales and over 30 ciders and perries, and the Beers of the Festival were chosen from local products in a "blind" tasting session by brewers and other experts. Overall winner was Yabba Dabba Do from Little Ox brewery in Freeland, while third was Dark Blue Oxford University Ale from White Horse brewery in Stanford-in-the-Vale.

Runner-up was Wallingford Brewery 8d Ale XXX, brewed to an 1890 recipe as part of a collaboration between Oakman Inns and the Dead Brewers' Society. This beer and further historic brews are being made available at the Cross Keys pub in Wallingford (see profile of Oak Taverns).

Despite the disappointing numbers Oxford CAMRA was able to cover its costs, and having made a healthy profit in previous years the festival is set to continue in 2023 and beyond.



Rhymes retire after 35 years in trade

Dave Richardson
reports from the
Gardeners Arms in
North Parade Avenue



David and Jenny Rhymes have run the Gardeners Arms for nearly thirty years (photo by Phil Gammon)



AN ERA CAME to an end in November with the retirement of David and Jenny Rhymes from the Gardeners Arms, after spending nearly 30 years at this much loved pub in North Oxford. Not to be confused with the Gardeners Arms in nearby Plantation Road, which is a free house, their pub in North Parade Avenue is a former Morrells pub and now a Greene King tenancy.

They made it a cosy, homely and very welcoming little pub with a broad range of clientele, although many CAMRA members have preferred to visit the Rose and Crown just across this narrow street because it is independent with a wider range of beers. But David and Jenny have made use of the guest beer allowance on their side of the street, with Castle Rock's Harvest Pale being one of their last guests alongside GK's "landlord bitter" and other own brand cask ales including Yardbird.

The 1872-built pub is bound to change its character in the revamp, which is expected to start early next year and will include re-siting the bar on the opposite side to now, and more dining tables. Josh Mullett-Sadones, who runs GK tenancies the Old Bookbinders in Jericho and James Street Tavern in East Oxford, is taking over on a temporary basis until the revamp. Whether the pub might then change its name to avoid confusion with the other

Gardeners Arms remains to be seen, although David doesn't think this will happen.

David and Jenny Rhymes, who lived above the pub, are a fine example of utter dedication to a pub and its customers, as they have worked seven days a week, often from around 7am to midnight, for more years than they care to remember. They haven't employed anyone for over 10 years and haven't had a holiday for 18 years, as employing a relief manager to work such long hours has proved impossible.

David started work for the Warlands bike and motorbike shop in Botley Road – still trading – in 1963, but in 1987 the couple had the chance to work at the White Hart in Wytham. The following year Morrells asked them to take over the Westgate pub in central Oxford (now the Cow and Creek) on a temporary basis, but they ended up staying for nearly five years. Formerly called the Anchor, it was rebuilt as a modern pub in 1983.

"The Westgate was Morrells' flagship managed house, but the previous manager couldn't control it and it became known for stand-up fights," recalls David. "We asked the police to keep a closer watch on it but on football days, as fans went from the railway station to the Manor Ground in Headington, there were always major problems.

When we arrived there were no glasses left, and no lampshades."

Morrells wanted to turn the Westgate into a tenancy a few years later, which David and Jenny could not afford. But then the Gardeners Arms came up, which was much more affordable, and they took up this tenancy in early 1993. North Oxford was much more genteel after the city centre, but the street was different then with two ladies' wear shops, a post office, an off-licence and other shops – whereas today, it is mainly food outlets and flat conversions.

"Our clientele then was mainly students, and we were known as the Junior Common Room of St Hugh's," says David. "We have a more mixed clientele now as many students use the college bars, and as their accommodation is better they don't use pubs so much."

Major turning points were the closure of Morrells in 1998, bought out by an asset stripper who sold on most of its pubs to GK in 2002; and the indoor smoking ban of 2007, which hit many pubs hard.

"Morrells knew all their tenants and we knew all of them, so its closure was a tragedy," he adds. "Our beers changed, and although some people didn't like that, many GK pubs now sell other beers. But for me to have SIBA beers, I would need

another pump which I don't have space for."

Supermarket beer prices were another challenge, but nothing compared to the onset of the Covid epidemic in 2020. Suddenly, with enforced closure, David and Jenny had a lot of time to think. Despite the government help available and GK cutting the rent, they still had to pay business rates and other fixed costs. They started thinking of retiring to a house they own in Yarnton, and talks with GK started only a few months ago, before the energy crisis hit.

Leaving the Gardeners meant leaving their home for nearly 30 years as well as the business, but they promise to be back for visits.

"We wanted to create an atmosphere like being in someone's front room, where everyone is welcome," says David. "We will come back as we have many friends and neighbours, including the Halls at the Rose and Crown. We've made lots of friends and a couple of enemies, and I'd like to think we'll be missed."

They will indeed, but the traditional, old-fashioned pub that the Gardeners is now will certainly change. Oxford CAMRA presented them with a long service award and we wish them well.

Are there too many Breweries?



Russ Taylor of XT Brewing offers his take on market conditions

DESPITE RECENT EVENTS, the number of UK brewers seems to keep growing, although the rate is now finally slowing and there have been quite a few casualties in the last couple of years. The question has to be: is there enough room in the market for all these brewers and is there still a growing demand for independent beer?

To put a little perspective on the matter it is interesting to look at how much of the beer market supply is from "craft" brewers. Craft is always a bit of a contentious term but for now let's take it to mean independent brewers who are not part of a global group, whether producing keg, cask, cans or bottles. In the UK beer market, many of these craft brewers are members of SIBA and currently their share of the whole beer market is about 6.5%.

The vast majority of beer sold in the UK is made by one of six global players. As a reader of this you are most likely to be only ever interested in the products of the craft brewers and pay no attention to the other brands on the bar, so the bias may not seem so significant from that viewpoint.

Does it matter? – for you the discerning drinker, who takes time to think about what beer to have and what pub to drink it in,

there has probably never been more choice. If you look at beer culture in the UK and around the world there is, and seems to be a continuing, growing desire for more interesting, premium beers with a back story. So, there is definitely a market for craft.

In the last two years things have changed in the way we consume beer, as there has been a shift away from drinking in pubs. The craft brewers have adapted and changed the way they package their beers; from only 16% of production going into bottles in 2017 to 34% now in both bottles and increasingly cans. There has also been something of a move from cask beer to keg.

If there is demand for craft beer, and with only 6.5% of the market there is a huge space in which to grow, just think that doubling the craft market would still represent only a measly 13% of all beer sales. Indeed, craft sales as a percentage of the whole market have grown a little over the last two years, whereas the overall beer market is still declining year on year. There is plenty of opportunity, but the Iron Curtain wrapped around craft brewers is getting access to that market. If cask demand is falling, which in 2017 made up three quarters of the output of SIBA members, to less than half now, then will

inroads into more of big-beer's market share in pubs have to be in keg? It is in that keg market that things start to get tricky when we look at those big global producers. Mostly the likes of Heineken, Budweiser and Molson Coors are not that bothered about cask; their business focus is all on the big fizzy brands, so they will be looking to defend those keg sales. Budweiser's Camden Town brand and Heineken's Beavertown have both been pushed hard and are now taking a very big share of non-lager premium beer sales in pubs.

Small breweries currently benefit from duty relief, a tax break that since its inception has kick-started and sustained the craft beer revolution. The relief helps to bridge the gap in brewing and sales costs for small producers, who will by size be inherently inefficient. Changes are coming which on the face of it look OK, including reduced rates for beers under 3.5% and a draught beer discount. However, this change also gives a significant tax cut to the big producers on those lower strength pub beers. If the changes go ahead you will start to see many more beers under 3.5% as the global giants take advantage of that reduced duty rate.

As a craft brewer, getting your beer into pubs is not just a case

of making a decent beer and selling it to all your local pubs. Unfortunately, many outlets are tied in some way and as much as they and their customers might want a tasty local craft beer, there may be no or very few taps and hand pulls available free of tie. Access to market is often blocked by those large producers who control many of the taps on the bar, and have the financial clout to defend and hold on to that advantage in a multitude of ways.

There are many forces at play in the changes to what and how and where people drink, as costs are going up for producers and pubs at a time of less disposable income. It is also interesting seeing the percentage of younger people not drinking beer nowadays.

But there is certainly room for more variety and more creative brewers, and the consumers are certainly there with a demand for those interesting and exciting beers. However, that needs to be matched by a growth in number of independent venues including brewery taprooms, micro-pubs, festivals, and of course pubs and bars who want to and can take those beers.

Drink independent!



Pub & BreweryNews

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Future of Wychwood

This has been a cause of speculation since it closed down its shop and tap room and pulled the plug on brewery tours, and with the closure of other breweries owned by the merged Carlsberg-Marston Brewing Company including Jennings of Cumbria. Now it has been announced that the Eagle Brewery in Bedford has been sold to Spanish brewing giant Damm, producer of Estrella Damm, and that the ales currently produced there will be transferred to other Carlsberg-Marston sites, which are in Burton-on-Trent, Wolverhampton, Ringwood in Hampshire and Wychwood in Witney. Wychwood brews Hobgoblin beers and the Brakspear range following transfer of the brewing equipment here following the closure of Brakspear's Henley-on-Thames brewery 20 years ago, but expansion of the Hobgoblin brand, now a best seller, means some of it is brewed elsewhere including Bedford, where Young's beers are also produced.

CAMRA has urged Carlsberg-Marston's to protect historic brands and continue brewing in Cumbria, where Jennings has recently closed. National

chairman Nik Antona said of the Eagle Brewery sale: "This latest news highlights a global brewing market which is massively unbalanced, grants too much power to the international brewing giants, and increasingly makes it impossible for independent, British brewers to compete. We believe that the UK beer market, and particularly the on-trade, needs constant monitoring by Competition Authorities, as a result of the continual consolidations that have taken place in the last five or so years.

"It's small comfort, but at least the Eagle Brewery in Bedford is

being sold as a going concern, and the brands which were born and brewed there will find new homes at other Carlsberg-Marston breweries. We're also optimistic that maximising production at Carlsberg-Marston's remaining breweries will maintain profitability and dissuade the company from further site closures and job losses."

New micro-pub for Abingdon?

The former Added Ingredients deli in Stert Street, Abingdon (below) is set to become a micro-pub run by Stuart Fanson, former manager at the





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Kings Arms, Wantage. A sign in the window of the premises informs former customers and passers-by that Jill, the proprietor of Added Ingredients, had had to give up due to illness but hoped to run events in future. Initial plans were to open as a micro-pub in November, which would seat up to 16 people, serve three cask ales and four keg lines, plus cans and bottles. This would not be the first shop converted into a bar in Abingdon, which has the Topsy Mercer cocktail bar and had a short-lived conversion called the Old Chemist.

Grapes, Oxford

City council-owned the Grapes, on George Street, remains closed but there is some news about possible re-opening. The lease is held by West Berkshire

Brewery, which is in financial administration following its failure nearly one year ago although brewing is now under way again under new ownership as Renegade. According to the city council the administrator has agreed terms for someone else to take on the lease, so we await developments.

Mitre, Oxford

An ancient Oxford pub owned by a college (Lincoln), the Mitre, is being revamped as the Gusto Italian restaurant with re-opening planned in December. Gusto is spending around £1.4 million on a site covering 10,000 square feet that has been empty since 2019, but it remains to be seen if any of its character as a pub will remain or any of its historical artifacts will be on display.

Pub closures and re-opening

The very difficult trading conditions and looming energy crisis and consumer spending crunch are causing more pubs to call it a day, although some which were closed at the time of writing are expected to re-open.

The Talbot, by Swinford toll bridge on the outskirts of Eynsham, closed in September and remained closed while owner Arkell's seeks a new tenant. The same fate befell the Prince of Wales in Iffley Village, Oxford, owned by Wadworth. The tenants of Greene King house the Waggon and Horses in Southmoor have announced that they expect to close in the New Year as the business had become unviable.

Better news is the re-opening of the Catherine Wheel at

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ABOVE: The Mitre is now Gusto Italian Restaurant

Sandford-on-Thames, which is privately owned, with Sharp's Doom Bar and Fuller's London Pride on the bar.

City council lays down marker

Oxford City Council has re-affirmed its support for pubs by refusing planning permission to build on the site of the derelict Crown and Thistle in Headington, closed by Greene King in 2011 and since sold to a developer. While this may never re-open as a pub, it indicates to developers that they have a fight on their hands if they

assume they can convert a former pub.

Councillors were concerned that granting planning permission would set "a dangerous precedent" for other pubs, pointing out that successive owners had allowed the Crown and Thistle to become dilapidated. Planning officers thought it was "a significant oversight" that the applicant had not tried to market the property as a freehold pub.

New beers from Vale

Vale has picked up prizes including second place at the St Albans CAMRA Beer Festival for Gravitas in September, and third place at the SIBA Beer Awards for VPA and Red Kite.



New beers include Brock's Den, a 4% dark malted ruby beer with a sweet honey aroma, brewed in partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), with 10p from every pint sold at the tap room or at one of its retailers being donated to the charity.

Rock the Kazbek is a 4% Pale Amber beer, while Santa's Ale is a 4.1% traditional chestnut bitter. Good King is a 4.9% Ruby Brown seasonal bitter.

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New pub and more “Dead Brewers” for Oak Taverns

Small Oxfordshire pub group concentrates on real ale



UPPER: Simon Collinson (left) with Dave Howse, landlord of the Cross Keys, Wallingford

LOWER: The Angel in Bicester

YOU MAY NEVER have heard the name Oak Taverns, but you may well be familiar with some of its pubs in towns and villages around Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire where they have gained a reputation as “the” place to drink real ale. Soon it will open another pub, this time in Wheatley, and it is pressing ahead with a project to recreate beers from long-gone local breweries.

You may already be familiar with the first of these beers – Wallingford Brewery 8d Ale XXX which is brewed to an 1890 recipe. This was voted runner-up in the Beer of the Festival awards at the Oxford Beer and Cider Festival last month, since when it has been available at the **Cross Keys** in Wallingford, within sight of the old brewery headquarters. Described as “a fairly bitter beer with marmalade and fruity overtones”, this was very unusual for its era in using Bavarian and Belgian as well as English hops. Two more historic beers are coming, including one from Halls of Oxford.

So who are Oak Taverns – not to be confused with Oakman Inns, a larger pub and hotel chain which also has some local venues? Oak Taverns is headquartered in Thame and has 10 pubs around the area and 14 altogether, in Thame, Bicester, Faringdon, Wantage, Wallingford, Chinnor, Sutton Courtenay, Princes Risborough and Haddenham, plus a few

outside this area. The new addition, the **Sun Inn** in Wheatley, has recently been functioning as a café bar and should re-open as a pub before the year end.

Oak is run by managing director Simon Collinson – himself a CAMRA member – his brother David and Emma Stevenson. Simon’s father was in the brewing business with Whitbread and then ran pubs, with Simon joining in 1998 after a spell at drinks wholesaler Matthew Clark. At one time the group numbered over 30 pubs, many on tied or temporary agreements, but Simon says: “We were a Jack of all Trades but master of none. We were running the **Cross Keys** in Thame which was owned by Punch, and didn’t do real ale before we came in. It was free of tie on cask ales, and we put in four or five lines which were very successful, and then we had the opportunity to buy it.

“That is the model we have used in our other pubs – cask ale orientated, not selling food, at a quality, freehold pub. Slowly and surely we have rolled that concept out over the last 10 to 12 years. There is always an opportunity to have a cask ale pub in any town as we quickly gained a reputation in places such as Thame and Faringdon. We also put a little micro-brewery into Thame and before we knew it, a lot of goodwill had been generated.”

The **Cross Keys** at Thame, the **Swan** in Faringdon and the **Angel** in Bicester all have micro-breweries, although they are not active all the time and the one at the Swan hopes to resume operations run by a local home brewer.

The decision not to offer food might appear odd, as so many pubs make most of their money this way and non-food pubs are a rarity. But the formula is successful for Oak Taverns, even in small towns and villages.

"Cask ale needs to be sold in good quality specialist outlets, not in big food pubs which don't get the throughput to maintain quality" says Simon. "No-one goes to the same pub every night of the week, but one night they may go to watch sports, one night they might go out to eat, and one night they might go to drink cask ale. We run a chain of 14 pubs and we don't fry a chip, employ a chef or a kitchen porter in any of them. The thousands of pounds we could have spent on a kitchen can be spent on other things, such as the garden at the **King's Arms** in Wantage which is now very popular because of its heated verandas."

Wantage is unusual as there were already two established real ale pubs here when Oak took over the **King's Arms** – the Shoulder of Mutton and the Royal Oak. But in other towns and villages, Oak operates the

stand-out real ale pub – the **Cross Keys** in Thame, the **Angel** in Bicester, the **Swan** in Faringdon and the **Cross Keys** in Wallingford are examples. It has village pubs too such as the **George** in Sutton Courtenay, renamed from the George & Dragon as the writer George Orwell is buried in the church graveyard here, although his grave bears only his real name, Eric Arthur Blair. Orwell's works include an essay called Moon Under Water which extols the virtues of the perfect (fictitious) pub, and this name is now used by various Wetherspoon outlets.

"The **King's Arms**, **George & Dragon** and **Bird in Hand** at Princes Risborough were all bought via Fleurets from Greene King, and were technically failed tenancies in need of much investment, but it's interesting to see that Greene King is not selling any UK assets now," explains Simon. "The **Cross Keys** in Wallingford was bought from Brakspear this year, and used to have over 60 covers for food. Some places do a big food or sports offer, when all they really need is to be a pub."

He describes the **Sun Inn** in Wheatley as "a perfect pub for us" as it is in very good condition, with the original bar and cellar set-up in place although it has latterly been operating as a café. A good range of real ales will be put in for re-opening, hopefully by December.

So what of Oak's collaboration with the Dead Brewers Society? This little-known organisation has exact recipes as used by many long-gone breweries, and Oak intends to produce a range of them for breweries local to its pubs. Next up will be Hunt Edmonds & Co's Bitter from 1952, this 19th century brewery in Banbury having lasted until 1967 after being acquired by Bass, when it had 187 pubs. Halls of Oxford AK Pale Mild from 1904 will be produced for Christmas, described as "a bit like a northern bitter rather than a southern mild ale". Oak's brewer, Nick Zivkovic, brews in Bicester although the Dead Brewers beers are produced at the One Mile End brewery in London.

"These are beers your father or grandfather might have drunk, and people really like to hear the story behind them," says Simon. "The Dead Brewers Society has thousands of records as these were kept because brewers were always being chased for tax and duty. We also analyse the local water before brewing starts."

It looks like we can expect more real ale pubs and more brewing from Oak Taverns, at a time when cask ale's future is questioned by some. A branch minibus tour of some of these pubs is being planned!

Lamb & Flag

re-opens at last – but what about the Eagle & Child?

Owner **St John's College** holds out hope the Eagle and Child could re-open next year

THE LAMB & FLAG finally re-opened on October 6 with eight cask lines for beer and cider, the same number as before, plus 12 keg lines. Its re-opening has also raised again the fate of the Eagle and Child, also owned by St John's College, closed since the pandemic started in March 2020 and directly across St Giles.

In a BBC Radio Oxford broadcast in late September, St John's principal bursar Zoe Hancock said there was "definitely a possibility" that the Eagle and Child could re-open as a refurbished pub rather than the grander scheme of converting the rooms above it into a small hotel. Also taking part in the programme were *Oxford Drinker* editor Dave Richardson, who had accused the college of leaving the closed pub to rot, and Shaun Gunner,

chair of the Tolkien Society that protects the legacy of a pub where the Inklings writers group, led by fantasy writers J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, met regularly in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Eagle and Child had been let to the Young's pub chain, which had agreed to the boutique hotel scheme before the onset of Covid but pulled out in 2021. Latterly it had been run by M&B as part of the Nicholson's brand, but staff working there on closure in 2020 described it as being in very poor condition, with dry rot, antiquated cellar equipment and rodent infestation. Since then it has stood empty.

Ms Hancock revealed that in January this year St John's had reached agreement with another company for the pub/hotel scheme, but that company had recently withdrawn leaving it "back to square one".

The pub is now being shown to prospective new investors, but despite the scale of the task in hand they must be encouraged by how busy the Lamb & Flag has been since re-opening.

The Inklings Community Interest Society running the Lamb & Flag says it will try to source local products whenever possible. It has been named Oxford CAMRA City Pub of the Year on numerous occasions, and has featured in every edition of the *Good Beer Guide*



from 2001 until closure. It couldn't be included in the 2023 edition, which has just been published, but if beer quality is consistently good it stands a chance of making it back in for 2024.

The Inklings have appointed Dylan Dudbridge-Hay, who started his career in the industry with a short stint at XT in 2018-19, as manager. He has four years' experience in the hospitality trade, most recently with local pub chain Dodo including its Caffeine and Cake brand operating at the Part and Parcel in Witney.

Announcement of a firm re-opening date has come as a relief after hopes were dashed previously that the Lamb & Flag would re-open by last Christmas, by Easter, and some time over the summer.

Renovation of the Grade II-listed building took much longer than expected, with the city council also vetting the work done as the pub is in a conservation area. This has included removing the front bar looking out over St Giles to create more space, a total revamp of the cellar, new Gents toilets and a revamp of the kitchen, although this remains small and the food offering will be modest. The most historic part of the pub is at the rear, the front bar being a relatively recent addition. It is expected that the nooks and crannies that characterise the main part of the pub will be retained.

The re-opening date was significant as it fell during Freshers' Week, the start of the university term and academic year. The Inklings are named after the original group led by fantasy writers J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, who used the Lamb & Flag but are more closely associated with the Eagle and Child.

The Inklings' Dave Norwood wrote to members of the group: "In 1911 a young man arrived at Exeter College, Oxford to read classics. A couple of years later, he changed courses to read English language and literature, which turned out to be quite significant. So we will re-open our pub at 6pm on Thursday, October 6 2022, which is possibly, or exactly, 111 years to the day that J.R.R. Tolkien arrived in Oxford.

"Thanks again for all your support and patience. It was a harder undertaking than we first envisaged, but all worthwhile journeys are. The extra work and time delays would have depleted our funds, but these extras have been covered by an incredibly generous donation from an anonymous Inking. So we can still re-open the pub with a healthy bank balance. As a Community Interest Company our ambition remains the same: to ensure the pub remains open to Oxford and the world for the next 1,000 years.

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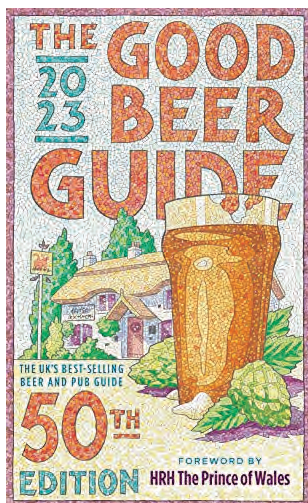
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Oxford's first micro-pub wins place in Good Beer Guide

White Hart, Wolvercote back in for first time in 40 years



The **Tile Shop Ale House** in Headington, Oxford has made it into the 2023 edition of the *Good Beer Guide*, while eight pubs are back in including the Community-Owned **White Hart** in Wolvercote, last featured in 1982.

The 50th edition of the *Good Beer Guide* includes 4,500 pubs all over the UK and an alphabetical listing of all breweries and pubs in each county, this being an innovation as previously the guide listed breweries alphabetically nationwide. The quality of cask beer is the decisive factor for inclusion although a range of other factors are considered including family and disabled facilities, and special events. CAMRA volunteers score pubs for the quality of their beer throughout the year, and there is no charge for inclusion.

CAMRA's Oxford branch – also covering Abingdon, Witney, Kidlington and nearby villages – has 24 pubs in the guide again this year, including some regular performers. Among those back in for 2023, in addition to the **White Hart** in Wolvercote, are the **Harcourt Arms** in Jericho, Oxford (last featured in 2011), the **Morris Clown** in Bampton (2015) and the **King's Arms** in Kidlington (2017). Returning to the guide after a brief absence are the **Cricketers Arms** in Littleworth, the **Seven Stars** in Marsh Baldon and the **Old Bookbinders** in Oxford.

All pubs making it into the *Good Beer Guide* should be congratulated, as this is a very competitive process and many good pubs don't make it because of the limit on numbers imposed on every CAMRA branch. It is particularly pleasing to see the **Tile Shop** come in, as micro-pubs are a trend nationwide. It only opened two years ago, but the people running it have shown they know all about keeping and serving real ale. It's the first micro-pub converted from a shop in Oxford, although there were already several others around the county, and also a bar converted from a market stall in Oxford. The **Tile Shop** generally serves two real ales from Tring Brewery, plus a third guest beer.

It is also very pleasing to see some very traditional pubs back in the guide. The **White Hart** in Wolvercote has come on in leaps and bounds since the lease was acquired by a Community-Owned group, and landlady Amanda Jones and her team serve a great range of mainly local ales. On the bar during a tour of Community-Owned pubs this month were Coolbreak Kid by Loose Cannon, Tumbling Jack by North Cotswold and Brock's Den by Vale. The **Harcourt Arms** is often regarded as the most traditional pub in Jericho, where some of the atmosphere of "Old Jericho" lives on – this being a Fuller's house with up to three real ales. A few streets away is the **Old Bookbinders**,



a Greene King pub making full use of its guest beer allowance and with a menu devised by its French leaseholder, including crepes.

Also very traditional is the **King's Arms** in Kidlington, a genuine free house with ever-changing real ales that also sells good value food. The traditional free house theme continues at the **Cricketers Arms** in Littleworth, with regular themed food nights as well. It is also great to see the **Morris Clown** in Bampton back in the guide, this being a rare example of a non-food pub in a country town but one with a dedicated local following. The **King's Arms** is a no-nonsense pub with good value food, while the **Morris Clown** is a rare example of a pub in a country town that doesn't serve food, but has a loyal following.

With 24 entries awarded to our branch, one new entry and several re-entries, then unfortunately some have had to drop out and this is based on their beer scores. Non-inclusion in the guide does not mean their real ale is necessarily lacking in quality, and they will no doubt be competing to get into the 2024 guide. Drop-outs for 2023 include **St Aldates Tavern**, the **Plough at 38** and the **Fir Tree** in Oxford, while the **Grapes** has closed. Also out are the **Nag's Head** and **King's Head and Bell** in Abingdon, **Wychwood Brewery Tap** in Witney (closed), and the **Siege of Orleans** in Carterton which no longer sells real ale.

We should also pay tribute to pubs that appear in the guide year after year, such as the **Masons Arms** in Headington Quarry (in every year since

2005) and the **Rose & Crown** in North Oxford (every year bar one since 1997). We expect the re-opened **Lamb & Flag** to be in contention for 2024, as it has eight hand pumps and a big reputation to live up to.

The *Good Beer Guide* 2023 includes a foreword by HRH the Prince of Wales, written before he became King Charles III. He writes: "Pubs are interwoven into the very fabric of British history, and they are still a much-loved and vital asset of communities up and down the country..... I am also keenly aware of the role that pubs, their landlords and staff played during the pandemic. Despite repeated lockdowns, closures and restrictions, we saw some shining examples of pubs going above and beyond their normal capacity to help their local area..... If we want to support and protect the pubs of tomorrow, I can only urge you to use this guide to visit the very best pubs the nation has to offer today."

The listing of 1,864 breweries includes 28 in Oxfordshire, while throughout the county there are 69 pubs included out of a nationwide total of about 4,500. By contrast the first edition of the guide in 1974 listed only 1,500 pubs and 105 breweries around the country, showing how traditional real ale has been revived since then.

Nik Antona, national chairman of CAMRA, added: "What makes the guide unique is that all the entries are compiled and vetted by a huge volunteer team based around the country. We work hard to ensure that all areas of the country are covered and, unlike some competitor titles, inclusion in this book is dependent on merit -- not on payment. The last few years have been an incredibly difficult time for the industry, and we need more support than ever before to keep our nation's pubs open and thriving."



LEFT: Tony Goulding with Theo Shaw (left) and Ian Langford at Tile Shop

ABOVE: Dave Richardson (left) with White Hart, Wolvercote landlady Amanda Jones and bar manager Billy O'Brien

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