



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

issue 43
December 2006 - January 2007



the Oxford Drinker

A revived venue and a local brewery - perfect match!

The revival of a name traditionally associated with Oxford, and revered and respected by all born and bred Oxonians - the rebirth of the **Jam Factory**. It is basically the former Marmalade Café and Gallery refurbished, with the addition of a newly fitted purpose built bar. However, the building in Park End Street was originally the famous Coopers jam factory. It has an Art deco style with low-level cool jazz/easy listening background music.

The new proprietors are Andrew Norton, a former manager of the Loch Fyne restaurant in Walton Street with an arts background, and Tom Buswell, who comes from an art development company.



The restaurant prices are reasonable for the area. For example, roast beef with all the trimmings for £9.95.

www.thejamfactoryoxford.com

The Jam Factory is the only central Oxford outlet for the whole range of **Cotswold Brewing Company** beers. The Brewery is based in Foscot.

There are currently two Cotswold draught beers on hand-pump: Three Point Eight, 3.8%, at £2.80 a pint, and Cotswold Premium Lager, 5.00%, at £3.00 a pint. Lined glasses are used. Beers to follow include Cotswold Dark - a Bock style dark lager - and Cotswold Wheat, which will arrive this month and next.

They also have Innis and Gunn Oak Aged Beer, 6.6%, and Deuchars IPA, in bottles.

www.cotswoldbrewingcompany.com

Let us hope this venture has more success than "Roots", which traded for barely three months then folded. The intention to make a go of it is certainly in evidence with enthusiasm in bucket loads!

A visit to this pub is included in the itinerary for the Oxford Drinker crawl on Friday 19 January. See Branch Diary/website for further details.



the free newsletter of the
Oxford City Branch of CAMRA
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

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oxford beer festival 2006



Tony Perry

Once again, the Branch took over the Town hall for the annual beer festival in October. This year saw 160 casks of beer delivered and racked up on the Wednesday. Unfortunately, I missed this job this year, as I was moving house!

The Thursday set up went well, with just a minor hitch when we realised we had set up one of the bars too close to the stillage. I thought that was going to be a major headache to move, but I turned round a few minutes later and it was all finished. Well done!

We opened on time on Thursday evening, and were soon doing a roaring trade to the usual selection of customers. We always do well

in Oxford, attracting a wide selection of people, which is always a good feeling. It seemed to ease off early on Thursday, with it being noticeably quieter after 10 o'clock. Not so on Friday though - the place was packed full all night, with people queuing on the street to get in. We had to resort to a 'one out, one in' system in order to manage numbers.

A lot of beers had sold out on the Friday night, but once again we had planned our reserve casks for Saturday, bringing on line another 40 new barrels. This gave customers a decent choice throughout the day, with the beer finally running out at about 9pm. The perry ran out earlier in the evening, but the cider lasted

out to about 9pm, leaving just the bottled beer. Strangely, the bottled beer stand became very popular!

Sunday morning saw the dedicated bunch of volunteers taking down the equipment, and loading it into various vans and cars, before returning a few empty casks through the streets of Oxford to the Turf Tavern, to the inevitable jests of having had a good night last night!

At the Turf, we relaxed with a Sunday lunch and a few beers. We then moved on to the Kings Arms for few more beers. At which point I left, but some were still going strong!

So, once more a successful festival. A very big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who gave their time and effort to make the festival run so well. And, of course, thanks to all our customers: we hope you enjoyed yourselves!



The Hook Norton Shire horses and dray outside the Oxford Town Hall during the Oxford CAMRA Beer Festival.

beer festival

diary

Friday 1 – Sunday 3 December 2006

South Hinksey Beer Festival

General Elliot, Manor Road,

South Hinksey, Oxford

Live music – folk from 8.30pm

Friday, rock from 8.00pm

Saturday. 01865 739369

Wednesday 6 – Saturday 9

December 2006

Far From The Madding

Crowd

Friars Entry, Oxford 01865

240900

Winter Beer Festival

www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

Wednesday 17 – Saturday 20

January 2007

CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival

New Century Hall, Corporation Street, Manchester

Opposite Manchester Victoria Station and the Metrolink.

Opening times and prices:

Wednesday 17th 5pm -

10.30pm £3 - NUS, OAP &

other concessionary £2

Thursday 18th 5pm - 10.30pm £3

Friday 19th 12 noon - 5pm £3

(Note - no access to downstairs bar) ALSO

Friday 19th 5pm - 10.30pm £4

Saturday 20th 12 noon -

10.30pm £3

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www.winterales.uku.co.uk

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credits....

The Oxford Drinker is the newsletter of Oxford CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale. It is published bi-monthly in February, April, June, August, October and December. 2000 copies of each one are distributed free of charge to pubs and other drinking establishments across the city and its surrounding area.

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beer styles - part 2

Richard Queralt



STOUT and PORTER

This short series of articles looks at the different styles beer native to Britain. Part 2 looks at stouts and porters. The illustrations are of beer bottle labels, mainly from Oxfordshire breweries. Not all are referred to in the text.

Both these styles have their roots in London, with one evolving from the other.



Porter came first, around 1720, and was the result of attempts to improve on the heavy, sweet brown beer native to the capital at the time.



The main reason for the change was the pressure on the sales of London's brown-beer brewers caused by the

strong pale ales which were beginning to find their way into the city from breweries in other parts of England.

The brown beer was the product of London's well water and the dark-brown malted barley available at the time. Part of the malting process involves heating the barley in a kiln. This was done using various types of fuel but usually wood and the smoke from the fire invariably tainted the malt. This left the finished beer with an unwanted smoky tang.



Trial and error led to a process being developed whereby extra hops were added to the beer, which was then matured in wooden barrels for several months, resulting in a sharper flavour without the previous smokiness. A lot of the residual sweetness had gone and, as a bonus, the beer had become 'bright' or clear, as opposed to the original version which tended to be cloudy.

The other aspect of porter's development came about during the first stage of the brewing process, known as mashing.

The mash is the malted barley to which has been added hot water to form a sort of thin brown porridge. The objective is to dissolve the sugars from the malt into the water, which will then be drained off leaving the malt behind. This brown sugary water, now known as wort, is then ready for the next stage of the brewing process.

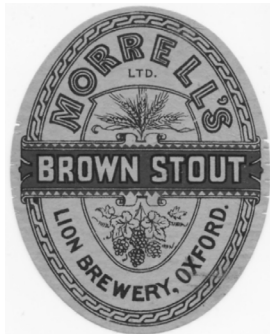


As mashing wasn't very efficient at extracting all the sugar, it was common practice to add hot water to the malt a second and third time, with each mash to be brewed separately. This resulted in three beers of different strengths: the first being the strongest and the third the weakest - usually known as small beer.

This new beer was a mixture of all three mashes brewed as one beer, highly hopped and matured, initially, for some four to five months. The final version wasn't arrived at overnight, though, and took at least 15 years to perfect, with the maturation period now stretched to over a year.



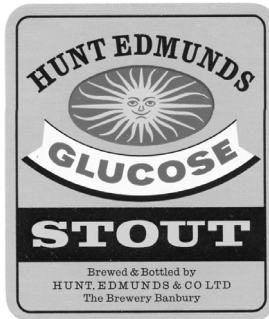
Thus, finally, was born porter, or to give it its original name, entire butt - entire because it was made from the entire set of mashes, with butt being another term for a barrel.



Soon, all of London's brown-beer brewers were making porter, and it wasn't long before it was taken up by breweries in other towns and cities. These 'country' brewers, as they were known to Londoners, would originally have bought porter from the capital to satisfy demand from their customers.

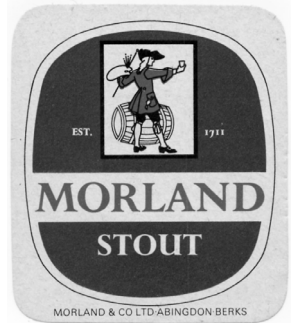
To muddy the waters, another, earlier, style of beer has also come to be known as entire butt. This was 'three threads' which was a mixture

of three different types of beer. These were usually a 'stale' brown, a pale and a mild beer, and were mixed from three different barrels when served in the pub. (Stale would originally have meant a beer that been matured over several months rather than 'not fresh' as it does today) Porter was made from the three different mashes brewed together as one beer. Three threads was three different brews delivered to the pub in three different barrels. Porter has come to be seen as a replacement for three threads; which it wasn't as the two styles continued to be sold alongside each other.



Three threads did eventually disappear, while porter went on to the capital's favourite beer. This was mainly because porter was cheaper – it was a single brew and didn't have to be mixed by bar staff, saving time at the brewery and in the pub. Also, as London's water wasn't suitable for brewing pale beers, they had to be bought in from country brewers, further adding to the cost.

The usual story used to explain how a beer called 'entire butt' came to be known as 'porter' is that it was a popular drink among 18th century London's working classes.

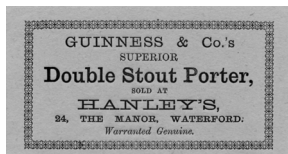


Portering was an essential part of the city's commercial life and the term porter was used to cover a variety of unskilled labouring jobs. Thousands were employed loading and unloading boats and ships at docks and wharves, or carrying goods around the city to shops, factories, businesses and homes. And it wasn't just goods that needed carrying. Sedan chairs, sometimes with two people in them, would require at least two porters.

Some businesses, such as the docks and markets, and not forgetting breweries, employed their own full-time porters. These brewery porters, besides fetching and carrying around the brewery site, would also have delivered beer from door to door.

There was also an army of freelance licensed porters, usually dressed in some sort of basic uniform complete with identity badge while hundreds of others did the job on a casual basis if they became unemployed or were laid off from their usual jobs.

Undertakers, for instance, by the nature of their business, hired porters as and when needed, to carry coffins, both full and empty. (Not everybody could afford a hearse and four black horses complete with ostrich feather plumes.)



The porter's job was hard, thirsty work. Calories were burnt off and had to be replaced. Just as the agricultural workers in the country and on the farms would slake their thirsts with cider or beer, so too would manual workers like the porters in towns and cities.

As a beer, porter would have been refreshing and filling. It wouldn't only have been drunk after work but during as well and several pubs provided tables outside their premises for porters to rest their loads on.

As with other trades, some pubs were named after the porters. For instance, there are several Market Porters still in existence around Britain and the last Ticket Porter in London was still trading up until 1973. The 'ticket' was the porter's badge.

Getting back to the beer, the stronger versions of porter were known as stout porters, as the early Guinness label on the left, shows. To the brewers of the day, a stout beer was a strong beer regardless of its colour. There would have been pale-coloured stout beers as

well as darker ones. From the mid-17th century the adjective stout had come to mean 'strong'. Similarly, the weakest beers were known as 'slender ales'.

It was towards the end of the 18th century, long after the 'invention' of porter, that the word stout came to be used as a noun in a shortened version of 'stout porter' and was no longer used to describe beers of any other style. Likewise, the use of slender fell from use when describing the weaker beers.

The original porters, stout or otherwise, were a deep, rich brown in colour and it wasn't until around 1800, with the discovery that roasted malt could be used as a flavouring material, that they began to take on the jet-blackness we're used to today. This colouring is arrived at by adding some malted or unmalted barley which has been left in the kiln and roasted until it is black. Besides the black colour, barley treated this way - then known as patent malt - also gives the beer a bitter taste.



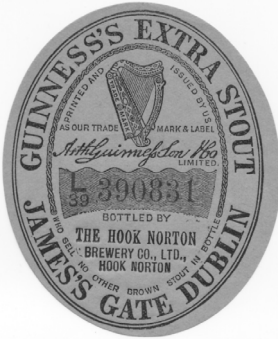
Towards the middle of the 18th century, the London porter brewers began exporting their beer to Dublin, where it became so popular that a number of Irish breweries went out of business. In 1759, Arthur Guinness took out a 9,000 year lease on one of these ailing breweries, the St James's Gate Brewery in Dublin.

Initially, the company's main products were ale and beer but by the 1780s porter had been added. The hard spring water used by the brewery was ideally suited to porter brewing and, with the addition of unmalted roast barley, a style of beer known today as dry Irish stout had been created.

To start with, most of the company's output was sold in the Dublin area, but by the 1820s the porter was also being exported to England. By the 1840s this market accounted for more than half of the brewery's total sales.

Stronger versions of porter were also brewed, called double stout and triple stout.

The double was marketed as Extra Stout and was sent in bulk to breweries both at home and in England, where it was bottled. The triple became Foreign Extra Stout and was destined for bottling companies in Liverpool and London, from where it would then be shipped abroad to Europe and the furthest reaches of the British Empire.



Almost every brewery in the land would have been involved in bottling Guinness. Some Oxfordshire examples from various eras are shown here. On the previous page is an early 1930s one from Morrell's in Oxford. The label above is from Hook Norton Brewery. Though not very legible in black and white, the band across the middle shows the figures 390831. These represent the date: 31st August 1939. This and the later Garne & Sons of Burford, right, now have the company's trade mark of a harp. On the far right is a 1970s example from Abingdon brewer Morland. This is similar in colour and design to today's bottle labels. The main difference is that the beer is now called Guinness Original. And it's weaker and, sadly, no longer bottle conditioned.

By the 1930s the Guinness brewery had grown from its original four-acre site to cover more than 60, becoming not only the biggest brewery in the world but also the world's seventh largest company. In 1936, Guinness built a new brewery at Park Royal, London to supply the south of Britain.

Today, Guinness is brewed in 45 countries, mostly with a concentrate from Dublin, with another 30 or so selling beer brewed at St James's Gate, Dublin. Altogether, Guinness is sold in over 150 countries. Almost every pub in Britain sells Guinness, as does every supermarket and off license.



Foreign Extra Stout, once only sold abroad but now available at some outlets in Britain and Ireland, is probably the best way of getting some idea of what Guinness originally tasted like.

In 1997 Guinness merged with a company called Diageo. This was the name Grand Metropolitan gave itself when it decided to sell off its brewing operations to concentrate on brand name drinks it had acquired, such as Smirnoff, Bushmills, Baileys, Bell's, Captain Morgan and many others. See its website at www.diageo.com for the full roll.

Grand Met had spent the previous thirty years buying up and closing dozens of breweries in Britain and was also responsible for producing the dreaded Watney's Red.



A few years after the merger, the company produced Extra Cold Guinness to sell alongside its usual Draught Guinness. It was almost tasteless and didn't sell, either in Ireland or the UK, causing great damage to the brand. This, along with other factors such as the smoking ban in Irish bars, has seen sales fall each year since, with an 8% fall in 2005 and in 2004 the Park Royal brewery was closed. All Guinness sold in the UK is now imported from Dublin.

But there's a lot more to stout than Guinness.

Next issue: more on stouts & porters

"I feel sorry for people who don't drink. When they wake up in the morning, that's as good as they're going to feel all day."

~Frank Sinatra

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abingdon road pub crawl



Matt Bullock

It's more than four years since we last did this crawl, and I'll be honest, there are some pubs here that I have not visited since then. The Abingdon Road is, of course, the main road from our fair city to the town of Abingdon, once the county town of Berkshire, and the majority of our route used to be in this county until the reorganisation of boundaries in 1974. Our destination did not seem to inspire many takers for this crawl, so just two of us met at the first pub, the Fox and Hounds, to wait in vain for the expected crowd.

The **Fox and Hounds** hasn't changed much since our last visit for the Oxford Drinker. It's one of very few pubs still owned by Morrells of Oxford Limited, the new company that sold much of its estate to Greene King. This pub, like all its others, has been retained for its property potential rather than its qualities as a pub, and the Fox occupies a huge site on the corner of Weirs Lane, the road that leads to Donnington Bridge. The pub is a massive half-timbered affair built in 1926, and this mock-Tudor décor continues inside, supplemented by many old photographs of military aircraft and the men who flew them. There's also a picture of the pub taken recently when it was marooned in the middle of a big lake during a flood. The interior is split into several areas at several different levels, but there is only one large bar, and only one beer, the less mighty Wadworth 6X, priced at a moderate two

pounds. Nevertheless, the beer was in good nick, even if I admit to not being a fan of the ubiquitous 6X, and the pub was busy at this early hour. The food portions looked huge, but there was no time to eat on this occasion, as John and I moved on once we were sure no latecomers were going to join us on this national brewery beer extravaganza. ★★



Our next destination was the **Duke of Monmouth**, a Greene King pub that is currently up for let (around £700 a week, I believe). The pub shows some fine remnants of previous ownership, namely a Halls plaque and a fine Halls Oxford Brewery motif on the wall. It's a very large pub, built in 1930, and has a large back bar, and a lounge at the front divided into several areas. It's very well presented and decorated, and the pictures here are of Morris cars. Greene King IPA and Abbot are the beers, and I can report that the Abbot was very good, served in a lined glass, albeit with a Budweiser logo, though there did not seem to be many takers here. Hopefully a new tenant will be able to build this up into a nice local; bear in mind several pubs around here have closed in recent years so this one really

needs to survive. ★★



The **Berkshire House**, now just known as the Berkshire, takes its name for the times when it was the first pub in the county when you left Oxford. Berkshire pubs in the days when this was built (1860s) were allowed to open for half an hour longer than Oxford pubs. There's one large, long room here with a pool room at the back and a lounge off this, but it all bears the scars of a Morrells Ale House "refurbishment" that was inflicted on the place a few years ago. The attempt to make this the Bookbinders of the South failed miserably, and all that remains is the peeling paint, panelling, rakes of old books and a motley collection of old furniture.



There's a definite Irish theme to the pub, and seems to have attracted a good local group of regulars, who occupied the bar stools when we passed by.

Greene King IPA is the only beer, but once again it was a decent pint; something you couldn't always say when it offered eight beers in its Ale House days. ★★

The final pub on the main road is the **Folly Bridge** - a fine late-Victorian building set back from the road in its own garden, designed by H.T. Hare, who was responsible for the richly detailed Town Hall, home of the Oxford Beer Festival. Having spent many an hour marvelling at his Town Hall design whiling away time at the festival, you can pick out some similarities in what he did at the Folly Bridge. Quite appropriate, then, that this used to be a venue for beer festivals run in the city a few years ago. The pub is owned now by Wadworth, and we plumped this time for the Henry's IPA having had 6X earlier. The stronger Bishop's Tipple is also sold here. A lively atmosphere prevailed, and although it was a bit smoky, it's not a bad old place to have a pint; the garden is very nice in summer, too, I can vouch for that. ★★



From here we deviated off the route to the **Marlborough House**, on Western Road. This place has changed a lot since I used to visit: the two rooms at the front are just one, the back room is closed, and the whole place looks a bit worn and tired. The beer we took a half of was Black

Sheep, and I'm glad to report that it was good; Deuchars IPA is also sold here, but was unavailable on this night.



Live musical entertainment greeted us as we walked through the door, though the longer we stayed it became more apparent that most of the audience were in some way involved in the performance, as several took turns to sing, play, or just adjust the sound and fiddle with the microphones. We stood a safe distance from the action, and watched proceedings through a thick smoke haze, which was not the reason for two fire engines appearing on the scene, though at one stage we were a bit unsure. We'll never replace the Wharf House, of course, but this place had something of the atmosphere and feel of the old place, a conclusion both of us came to immediately after leaving on our walk back up to Folly Bridge. ★★

And so our final destination was nigh, the **Head of the River**. This is the newest pub we visited, being opened first in 1977, and the interior has been extended recently right

to the riverside in the old gallery that was a fine spot to enjoy a pint whilst watching the Salters steamers and many badly controlled punts. The Fullers beers here are usually good but very cold, and today was no exception - there was also Gales HSB on draught, Fullers current seasonal, though of course now one of their own brews. The Head of the River is in my opinion a bit bland and uninspiring inside now, and is really a summer pub with its fabulous patio garden on the banks of the Thames and under the shadow of the old bridge, the "Grand Pont", built in 1825. Upstairs has been converted to a hotel, and breakfast cereals were being laid out in the bar long before last orders was called. Oh, for those that care about these things, the toilets are dreadful. ★★



Our next crawl is on 19 January 2007, 'Around the Railway station'.

Please feel free to come along and take part.

old bookbinders festival



David Hill

The Old Bookbinders in the Jericho district of Oxford hosted a mini-beer festival on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st of October, with live music on the Friday evening. They were allowed to source five of the ten festival beers locally, so beers from the excellent West Berkshire and Butts breweries were on along with products from the now extensive Greene King brand portfolio. These included Olde Trip from the recently acquired Hardys and Hansons brewery near Nottingham. They also served Upton Cider.

The beers were served from the pub's six hand-pumps

with the remaining being taken direct from the cellar and on the two visits I made over that weekend were in great condition.



The festival was very successful with many positive comments and all the festival beers and the one cider were gone by the end of Saturday.

The one slight glitch was with

Power Station, a beer from the local Appleford brewery, which is gaining a reputation of being slow to clear. At the Oxford Camra beer festival we received it on a Wednesday and it still wasn't in a fit condition to serve when the festival closed on the Saturday. The Bookbinders got theirs on the Tuesday before the festival and eventually served it on the evening of the following Tuesday, when it all went in one session.

Landlord Matty Marren was very pleased with the festival and is hoping he can run them bi-annually and that GK will let them get a wider selection of beers in the future.

Dick and Lin welcome you to the

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OXFORD CITY CAMRA



NEEDS
YOU

A Pubs Database has been set up on the Oxford City CAMRA website which shows all the pubs and bars listed in the region. This can be searched by pub name, town or postcode. The information on each pub is very limited at the moment and this is where you come in.....

We would love to hear from you about your local pub or any you visit in our region. Just look up the pub on the database and click on 'Send a comment'.

We try to visit pubs across our region as much as we can, often visiting hard to reach pubs in one of our car trips - see page 19 - but we always on the look out for great pubs in our area which we may have missed or not visited for some time.

www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/pubs.php

oxford city pubs database



Neil Hoggarth

The Oxford City branch of CAMRA covers a large area - much larger than the name "Oxford City" would tend to suggest. As well as the city itself, we draw our membership from surrounding towns and villages such as Abingdon, Eynsham, Kidlington, Wheatley and Witney. As anyone who has been reading the reports of rural pub survey trips will have realised, we are responsible for areas like Otmoor and villages throughout the west of the county, right up to the Gloucestershire border.

It is often unclear to people (even those of us who are active branch members!) where the branch boundaries lie, and there is confusion over whether particular pubs are the responsibility of the Oxford branch or one of the other Oxfordshire branches of the campaign: North Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire or Vale of the White Horse. The formal definition of the branch membership area is based on postcode areas - OX1, OX2, OX3, OX4, OX5 (except OX5 3), OX14 (except OX14 4), OX18 (except OX18 4), OX28, OX29 (except OX29 0, OX29 8 & OX29 9), OX33 and OX44 9.

The other difficulty that we face is one of sheer scale. There are about 320 pubs and bars in the branch area, and some 140 of those are outside Oxford. With only 15 or 20 activists within the branch who attend meetings and social events, most of whom are Oxford-based, you will appreciate that we are spread pretty thin when it comes to surveying pubs for the Good Beer Guide,

choosing a branch pub of the year, fighting pub closure campaigns, or just staying up to date with general pub news.

The Pubs Database was added to the Oxford branch website in September. The first aim of this project was to publish a definitive list of all the pubs and bars in the branch area, including all the contact details that we have for them. Using the pub lists that searching the database can provide, it is now easy for everyone to see which towns and villages we cover and to figure out which pubs fall in the branch area.

Although the database does not (yet) give much information on each individual pub, we hope that even in its current form it is a useful resource for branch members and the general public. It can be used to find all the pubs in a particular town/village, or all the pubs in a particular postcode prefix - useful for planning crawls! It also contains a number of aliases and old names for pubs, which might be helpful (for example: Looking for a pub in Jericho called the Prince of Wales? It is the pub on Walton St that we now call Jude the Obscure).

Our next big hope is that we can use the Database as a tool to gather news, views, and information about pubs from a much wider circle of people. Anyone can onto the website, find a particular pub in the database, then click on the "Send a comment" link to send us a short note about that pub. We would very much like everybody with an interest in pubs, CAMRA members,

publicans and members of the public, to keep us informed about what is going on with pubs across the area. We want to know which pubs you think are good (or bad!), which places serve the best pint (or a dreadful one!), when a pub gets an interesting new beer, when the publican changes, etc. We would also like to hear from anyone if they think that the information in the database is outdated or incorrect. Have any of the pubs closed? Changed names? Have we accidentally missed any of the pubs in our area off the list? The more information we get, the better we can: make the Oxford Drinker; make the branch web site; select pubs for the Good Beer Guide; and the more effectively we can campaign on behalf of real ale and real pubs in the local area.

Personally, I would very much like to include more details for each pub: opening times, beers served, pub descriptions, available facilities, photos, etc. In an ideal world we would turn the database into something resembling an online pub guide for the whole area. However, having helped to survey for pub guides in the past, I am conscious that this involves a very large amount of work. Worse, "guide" type information is only really useful if it is updated regularly. The viability of a richer, more feature-full database in large part depends whether or not pub-goers and publicans across the area can feed us enough information to make it worthwhile.

Over to you, folks ...

“WHAT’S THE MATTER
LAGERBOY,
AFRAID YOU MIGHT
TASTE SOMETHING?”



around the county



Tony Perry

On 1st November, Alistair Pitman, John Mackie and I met up at the Lamb and Flag for an evening's drive around West Oxfordshire.

First port of call was **The Swan** at Radcot, where Ray Borritt joined us. The Swan is a Greene King pub, with a very pleasant modern interior. The beers available on handpump were GK IPA, Abbot, Old Speckled Hen and Ruddles County. Both Alistair and John went for the Ruddles, which was in very good condition. In fact John waxed lyrical about it, saying it was at just the right temperature, with bags of flavour. I was driving, so settled for a lemonade and lime! I did try the toasted sandwiches though, having the mozzarella, tomato and basil, which was very tasty.

Ray was the font of all local knowledge for the evening, and apparently the bridge at Radcot is the oldest over the River Thames.

Moving on, we drove to Kelmscott to visit **The Plough**. This is a very friendly local pub, with Hobgoblin, Tim Taylor Landlord and Hooky Bitter on handpump. Most of us had the Landlord, which was absolutely superb (yes, even I had a half!). However, Alistair had the Hooky, the last one out of the barrel, which he thought was a bit sour. Mind you, he didn't say anything to the landlord, and managed to force it down alright!

The landlord had been at the pub for about five and a half

months, and was keen to engage us in conversation about CAMRA matters generally. We swapped contact details and promised to let him know more about the activities of the Branch. Bear in mind this is a pub with a GL7 postcode, so often falls between stools in terms of CAMRA branches! This pub was my personal favourite of the night, so I'd like to think it comes under our branch!

The village has connections with the artist and writer, William Morris, as he rented Kelmscott Manor as a summer retreat. The village has a museum in his memory, and he is buried in the churchyard. More recent famous locals include Kate Moss who, we were told, is a regular in the Plough.

Next up, we headed to Langford and **The Bell**. Beers on handpump here were Tim Taylor Landlord and Hooky Best, plus they had lagers from the Cotswold Brewing Company. Ray and John had the Premium Cotswold Lager, and Alistair had the Hooky, which he said was in very good condition. This pub had a bustling atmosphere and was popular with diners. In fact Ray's local anecdote was to tell us of the omelettes that you used to be able to get at the Bell years ago. Apparently they were the best he has had anywhere.

We debated how to describe the interior of this pub, as it looked like it had been refurbished, but retained the

traditional feel with exposed beams. Therefore, we eventually settled on 'Refurbished Traditional'!

Our final pub of the night was the **Five Ails** at Filkins. This is a Brakspear pub, and on the night of our visit, they had Brakspear Bitter, Special and Hobgoblin. The beers sampled were all in good condition.

The pub's name comes from the motto on the sign, which has five figures:

- A king in his regalia, I govern all.
- A bishop in his pontificals, I pray for all.
- A lawyer in his gown, I plead for all.
- A soldier in his regimentals, I fight for all.
- A labourer with his tools, I pay for all.

However, the pub sign at the Five Ails has the alternative design, with the King replaced by the Devil, and his motto, I Take All!

Filkins won the Oxfordshire Small Village of the Year Award in 2006, and Ray told us this was the village home of Sir Stafford Cripps, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1947-50.

The pub itself features quality accommodation, having won numerous awards for guest accommodation. We sat in comfortable leather sofas next to an open fire, which was a very pleasant way to end the evening.



Oxford City CAMRA Pub of the Year 2001
Listed in the Good Pub Guide 2006
www.rose-n-crown.co.uk

cape of good hope?



Neil Hoggarth

The former Scream pub on The Plain (where the Cowley and Iffley roads separate) underwent a major refurbishment in September, re-opening on 4th October under its original historic name, "The Cape of Good Hope". The pub is still owned by Mitchell & Butlers, but has undergone a major change in style. The changes are similar to the metamorphosis that the former Scream in Jericho underwent last year: upmarket pub/bar style, subdued lighting, candles, extensive wine list, and fancy menu (without being overly food-orientated).

The big news from CAMRA's point of view is that the pub has gone from being keg-only establishment to serving three real ales on hand-pump, along with a Weston's Organic Vintage cider also on hand-pump. The beers on offer initially were Caledonian

Deuchers IPA, Charles Wells Bombardier and Timothy Taylor Landlord. The manager tells me that he plans to keep the Caledonian as a permanent beer, but may experiment with the other two once things have settled down (a few weeks later Adnams Broadside was spotted as substitute for the Landlord).

There is also an impressive array of imported draught beers: Czech - Staropramen, Budweiser Budvar; German - Becks Vier, Erdinger Weissbier, Paulaner Lager; Belgian - Belle-Vue Kriek (cherry flavoured lambic), Fruli (a strawberry flavoured white beer), Hoegaarden, Leffe; Italian - Peroni; and a Japanese brand brewed under license by Charles Wells - Kirin. A few of the UK "big brand" lagers are also available, for those that really

want them, but the fonts for these are discretely hidden away inside wooden enclosures on the bars (similar in approach to the disguise that the Morrell's Old Alehouse pubs used).

In 2002 (Oxford Drinker 16) I wrote about the wave of pub refurbishments along the Cowley Road which seemed to be sweeping away real ale. Is it possible that the pendulum is swinging back? The Cape is just one of several recent refurbishments which give cause for hope: further up the road the Exeter Hall has also recently undergone an extensive refurb, and now serves three beers on hand-pump where previously there was only one. Now, if only M&B can be persuaded to do something about the City Arms!

what's on



december 2006 - january 2007

Tuesday 12th December,
7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Waterman's Arms, South Street, Osney Island, Oxford (note: mid-month rather than end of the month, for obvious seasonal reasons).

Monday 18th December
6.30pm

Christmas Social

Pub crawl starting at the Lamb & Flag, St Aldates, Oxford

Friday 19th January
7pm

Oxford Drinker Crawl

"Around the Railway Station". Meet at the Honeypot, Hollybush Row.

Tuesday 23rd January
6.20pm

Wantage outing by bus

Service 33 leaves Oxford (St Aldates, stop H4) at 6.20pm, calls at Abingdon (High St) at 6.43pm and arrives at Wantage 7.17pm.

Tuesday 30th January
7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Cape of Good Hope, The Plain, Oxford.

The branch normally meets on the last Tuesday of the month, but will vary the pattern in December.

Members and non-members are welcome at all events. Further details are available at branch meetings, on our website www.oxfordcamra.org.uk or by contacting the Social Secretary social@oxfordcamra.org.uk

inn and around oxford



The Jolly Postboys at Florence Park recently acquired new tenants and recently reopened. They new tenants are Michael Drysdale and Glynis Thorp. Although they have no previous business experience of the licensed trade, Glynis has done bar work at Carterton Social Club. We wish them both every success in the venture.

Also, a belated welcome to Thea Stewart, who has been manager of **The Honeypot** in Hollybush Row since May. A former Morrell's pub known as The Albion it fell to the hands of Greene King who renamed it and only offered their IPA as a real ale. It is now owned by Admiral Taverns, a growing pub company with an enlightened real ale policy which Thea has taken advantage of by stocking Timothy Taylor's landlord as the regular beer along with a frequently changing guest. Again we wish them all the best.

The **William Morris**, a JD Wetherspoon pub in Cowley, has recently been refurbished and reopened. On visiting it appears to be a very popular eating place for local families.

The **Duke of Monmouth** on Abingdon Road is to move to a new tenant after a relatively short tenure by Phil and his family. It is hoped that new tenants will be in place before Christmas. Otherwise the pub may go into management for a short time. The pub contin-

ues its usual trade, including IPA and Abbot ales on offer.

Antiquity Hall has been re-branded and reopened as the **Oxford Retreat**. On visiting the pub, a mystery beer was found. This turned out to be London Pride but there was no pump clip. There are no structural changes and the design is just a basic bar with restaurant area. There is, however, a designer graffiti gents! For central Oxford, restaurant menu is very reasonably priced, with every main dish under £10. The menu does go over the top with absurd phraseology. How about, "a bed of wilted spinach" or "served in an iceberg lettuce nest". Some "daily changing market fresh sausages" were tried but for a real classic of pretentious nonsense sample this: "Herb battered fish and chips with broken garden peas and homemade tartare sauce. Please ask your waitress for today's fish". Does it take a sledgehammer to break a pea? The pub is owned by Mitchell and Butlers but still has some way to go before it's in the same league as the Reading Retreat.

Owners of the **Trout Inn** at Godstow, Mitchells and Butlers, have announced that a new look is planned for this historic and very popular riverside pub. They claim it has become a victim of its own success, and that a "gastro pub" is planned, presumably with higher prices to keep the crowds to a manageable level.

The pub has featured many times in the Inspector Morse TV series, but regulars fear M&B's proposals will create the type of environment Morse would have hated: Colin Dexter has even lent his support to their campaign.

Licensee Bob Maher will be leaving the pub once the refurbishment gets underway in the New Year, a job that is expected to take eight weeks. Presumably the work is in response to alterations made to the nearby White Hart at Wytham, which changed from a village pub into a gourmet restaurant a couple of years ago - a move very successful for its owners but to the detriment of the village itself.

The **Dew Drop Inn** in Summertown is currently closed for major refurbishment but is planned to reopen in early December.



More across the page....

inn and around oxford... trios

Meeko Oates, who runs the Vale of the White Horse Pub of the Year, the Shoulder of Mutton in Wantage, has taken on the lease of the **Plough** in Witney, with two partners: Luke Raimbach, landlord or Arbery's, also in Wantage, and Guy Ripley who has managed clubs in London. Guy will run the pub from day to day, while Meeko will be in charge of beer orders, the cellar, etc. He will continue to run the Mutton as his main priority.

The Plough is owned by Admiral Taverns, who have an enlightened micro-brewery policy. Meeko plans to buy only from micros, just as soon as the inherited stock (Marstons, Flowers and Arkells) has been consumed.

The pub has a small function room, and a beer festival is

already being considered. This trio took over on Monday 20th November and so far have stuck to the plan, with two Butts beers already on sale.

We hope they live up to their other promise - not to serve Greene King beer!

The **Ampleforth Arms** in Risinghurst is now under new management. The team, this time a trio from Essex, have two real ales on handpump - Adnams Bitter and Deuchars IPA on visiting - but they promise to vary the selection on offer and build from this solid base. Pub opening times are now back on track - all day everyday from 12 onwards. Keep up the good work!

some words of wisdom

As explained by Cliff Clavin of Cheers: The Buffalo Theory

"Well ya see, Norm, it's like this..... A herd of buffalo can only move as fast as the slowest buffalo. And when the herd is hunted, it is the slowest and weakest ones at the back that are killed first. This natural selection is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular killing of the weakest members. In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells. Excessive intake of alcohol, as we know, kills brain cells. But naturally, it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of beer eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain a faster and more efficient machine. That's why you always feel smarter after a few beers."

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community pubs week



CAMRA has announced plans for a national week of action in February 2007 to help preserve and promote pubs that serve as an irreplaceable asset to their local community yet are closing at a frightening rate.

CAMRA research in 2005 showed that 26 pubs a month are lost in Britain. However, early indications from further research suggests that current figures may actually be much higher and it is not theme pubs or chain bars that are under threat but pubs at the heart of the local community.

The first ever **Community Pubs Week** will take place from **17th February to 24th February** in order to raise the profile and importance of pubs in the community and encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to support this valuable community amenity.

CAMRA defines a community pub as a pub which appeals to a wide cross-section of the

local community rather than being predominantly targeted at particular social or age groups.

CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "All soaps on TV and radio have community pubs - The Bull, The Rovers Return, The Queen Vic, The Woolpack - but sadly many real communities in rural and urban areas are in danger of losing or have already lost their community pub.

"Community pubs, particularly those in more remote rural areas, are often the hub of the lives of the local people. None of us want to be in a situation where the only way we speak with our neighbours is through a car window or a stolen conversation at a supermarket many miles away. However an increasing number of these pubs are being permanently lost."

"The smoking ban in place or coming into force shortly in different parts of the UK means pubs face a difficult time in

2007. People need to realise that their local is a valuable asset that must be protected."

"We know people care about their communities as, in a terrific show of support, four million people recently signed a petition calling for the Government to do more to save rural post offices. The threat to the community pub is extremely dire and unless we do something to curb the trend CAMRA fears many communities will find their local pub torn from them."

Throughout Community Pubs Week, CAMRA members across Britain will be asking local licensees to get involved with the campaign and put on events and promotions for people in their communities to enjoy. These will feature on CAMRA's website www.camra.org.uk/communitypubsweek.

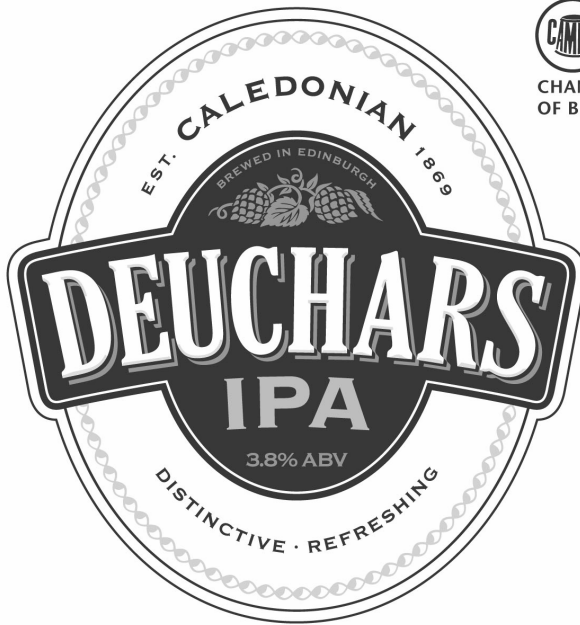
Further details of events during Community Pubs Week will be announced in early 2007.

and now for the science bit ...

According to government warnings we should all drink responsibly. And they're right! Yes really! Here are some of the reasons why.....

WARNING: The consumption of alcohol may:

- cause you to tell your friends over and over again that you love them
- make you think you can logically converse with members of the opposite sex without spitting
- cause you to think you can sing
- make you think you are whispering when you are not
- leave you wondering what the hell happened to your underwear
- create the illusion that you are tougher, smarter, faster and better looking than most people
- lead you to think people are laughing WITH you



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give me some real cider!



What can you do to promote cider and perry if you live in one of the parts of the country remote from cidermakers? At first glance it might seem a daunting task. If there is no real cider or perry regularly available you might think there is no obvious customer demand for it.

Think again! – don't they serve keg cider in just about every pub in Britain? Of course they do and with the new vogue for keg cider served with ice there are new *cider* drinkers being created every day. Some of them, at least, would relish the chance to try the *real* product, but never seeing it in local pubs are unlikely to ask for it.

So what can you do? Well, you need to identify potentially good cider and perry outlets. That will be less difficult than you might imagine: any committed real ale pub could be a good cider pub too. Practice shows that real cider will attract the same customers as the real beer does – discerning drinkers who enjoy quality products and will treat them with the respect they deserve. If you are trying to think of examples of such pubs have a flick through the 5000 or so currently listed in the Good Beer Guide.

Potential cider publicans might also need pointing towards suppliers. Most major distributors of beer will also be

able to offer some cider but, at best, this is likely to be a very limited choice and only from large producers. There are, however, two small distributors who are willing to send surprisingly small quantities of cider and perry from traditional farm makers anywhere in the country: Merrylegs and Jon Hallam.

Need help and advice promoting the products? Even if you don't have access to expert local knowledge, CAMRA has appointed Regional Cider Co-ordinators who will be only too happy to share all the information that might be needed.

So, what are you waiting for?

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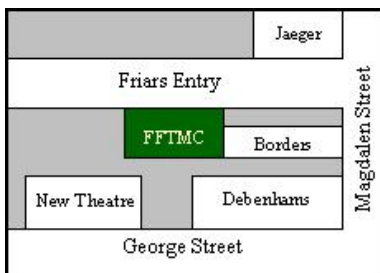
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