



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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April - May 2007



the Oxford Drinker

A new name wins branch pub of the year 2006...

A former Greene King pub that has had four owners in the past seven years has been crowned Oxford City CAMRA Pub of the Year 2006. Vale Brewery of Haddenham purchased the General Elliot in South Hinksey village from New Wood Inns in 2005, who in turn had taken the pub from Greene King which had acquired it as part of the Morrells estate. Vale have spent a lot of money on the pub, and since it reopened in August 2005 in the very capable hands of John Westendorp, the pub has gained a growing reputation for good food and an excellent selection of real ales.

The General Elliot beat off competition from six other pubs in the race for Oxford CAMRA's coveted award, which was voted on by members who had to visit and then rank all seven pubs in their order of preference. The award is recognition of the hard work John and his staff have put in at the Elliot over the past

couple of years, and the commitment Vale have shown to the pub. A selection of ales from breweries across the country is always available at the pub, and quarterly beer festivals are held to allow drinkers to try an even bigger range of ales.

Congratulations and commiserations are extended also to the Harcourt Arms, Jericho, which finished a close second, and the Lamb and Flag, which came in third, and also to the four other pubs that made it onto to original shortlist.



Our congratulations go to John and his staff, and to Vale brewery, for their efforts. A presentation of the award is planned for later in the year.

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

beer festival helpers' trip



Graham Baker

The first branch social event of this year was the annual helpers trip, open to all those who helped at the Town Hall Beer Festival last October. In previous years we have travelled as far north as Burton on Trent and as far south as Southsea. This year we headed west to Cheltenham and Gloucester.

Our first port of call was a tour of Battledown Brewery, situated in Battledown on the eastern side of Cheltenham. We were made welcome by the owner Roland and offered unlimited amounts of Saxon and Brigand, a few lucky souls also tried the last of a barrel of Turncoat, while we enjoyed the beer Roland gave us a talk on the brewing process and a history of the Brewery. Time went very quickly so we dragged ourselves away for a quick crawl of a few of Cheltenham's pubs.



Most of us went to the Cheltenham Motor Club, a private club that is open to card-carrying CAMRA members. Again, a friendly welcome from the barman and the locals, and a fantastic selection of beers including Donnington SPA, Nottingham

Partners In Crime, Wye Valley HPA and Sarah Hughes Ruby Mild.

Working our way through the town towards our pick up point we also called in at the Swan, which was OK, but apparently lacking the charm it had years ago.



The pick up point was the Bath Tavern – a single-bar free house serving Battledown Saxon and Sharps Doombar. The pub was very busy and the food looked great but time was short and we still had Gloucester ahead.

We were picked up outside the pub and after a short journey arrived at the Dick Whittington in Gloucester, a frequent winner of the local CAMRA pub of the year award. About eight beers were on offer including Moles Tap Bitter, Purity Gold and Wolf Porter.



Fighting the temptation to stay the rest of the day here we managed to visit some of the other Gloucester Good Beer Guide entries including the Fountain Inn – a comfortable 17th century pub tucked down an alleyway with a large courtyard – and the New Inn – a Grade 1 listed building dating from 1455. There had been a beer festival here the week before and there was little left, which was a shame, but a good reason to go back to Dick Whittington and wait for the coach to pick us up.

On the way back to Oxford we had a refreshment stop at the Plough at Ford. A good chance to visit this remote Donnington Pub, which is a favourite with the local horse racing fraternity.

Thanks to all those who came on the trip for your help at the festival, and to those who couldn't make it.

beer festival

diary

Friday 6 – Monday 9 April
Woodman Inn Beer Festival
 North Leigh, nr Witney
 01993 881790

Friday 13 - Saturday 14 April
Coventry Beer Festival
 Coventry Rugby Football Ground
<http://uk.geocities.com/covcamra/>

Saturday 21 – Sunday 22 April
St George's Beer Festival
 The Fox, Sandford-on-Thames
 01865 777803

Saturday 21 – Sunday 22 April
St George's Beer Festival
 General Elliot, South Hinksey
www.generalelliott.co.uk

Monday 23 April – Monday 7 May
Wetherspoon Beer Festival
www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

Friday 27 - Sunday 29 April
Old Bookbinders Beer Festival
 See advert page 12

Friday 27 - Sunday 29 April
Cherry Tree, Steventon
 01235 831222

Saturday 28 April
Chipping Norton Beer Festival
 Town Hall, Chipping Norton
www.chippingnorton.net

Thursday 3 – Sunday 6 May
Reading Beer & Cider Festival
 King's Meadow, Napier Road5
www.readingbeerfestival.org.uk

Saturday 5 - Monday 7 May
White Hart, Fyfield
 01865 390585

Saturday 21 – Sunday 22 April
St George's Beer Festival
 General Elliot, Hinksey (see above)

Saturday 2 June
Chadlington Beer Festival
 Memorial Hall, Spelsbury Road
www.chadlingtonbeerfestival.com

credits....

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Full details on our new FESTIVALS webpage at www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

beer styles - part 4

Richard Queralt



MILD

This short series of articles looks at the different styles of beer native to Britain. Part 4 covers mild. The illustrations are of beer mats from defunct local breweries.

As a style, mild is a type of beer that is hopped less than bitter and usually of lower alcohol content than many other styles. It gets much of its flavour from malts or roasted barley and is both distinctive and tasty.

Mild's roots lay in the brewing of porter, a style of beer covered in Part 2 of this series. Porter was developed in the 1720s to improve on the heavy, sweet brown beers made using the dark-brown malted barley available in the early 18th century, which was of a much lower quality compared to today's. This barley, having been heated in a wood-fired kiln, invariably resulted in beer with a pronounced flavour of wood smoke. It was found that maturing the beer for several months gave a sharper tasting, 'winey' or vinous quality without the previous smoky tang. This beer went on to become known as porter and became very popular the length and breadth of Britain for well over a century.

By the 19th century the malting process had improved, with coke being used to heat the kilns rather than wood which meant the malted barley no longer had its previous smoky characteristics. This meant that

breweries could sell the beer without going through the lengthy maturing period. When demand for porter outstripped supply, breweries began to substitute the immature version as a stop-gap.



Oxford brewer Morrell's won an International Brewing Industry award for their Mild in 1992.

Without the winey taste brought about by maturing, this 'milder' beer began to create its own market. It worked out cheaper than porter because it could be sent straight from the brewery to the pub, no longer requiring the brewery to buy or rent expensive storage space, making it more affordable for the poorer beer drinkers who had been making do with the inferior brown beers of pre-porter days.

This mild ale also became popular among more affluent drinkers, to the detriment of porter sales. Similarly, the clean-tasting, light-coloured pale ales, also made more affordable by the advances in malting, were chipping away at the porter market too.

After 150 years of growth, porter demand began to fall and, having accounted for 75% of the beer market up to around 1870, had dwindled away to almost nothing by the turn of the century.

In 1959, 42% of the beer sold in the UK was mild. Today it is around 3%. The main reason for this was the keg lager boom of the 1960s, which also affected traditional beer in general. The de-industrialisation of Britain in the 1980s dealt a further blow to the style with the widespread loss of its main market, the blue-collar workers such as coalminers and steelworkers. However, the style has also picked up something of a negative image, being seen as old fashioned or cloth-capped, which the brewing industry has found hard to shake off.

Banks's brewery in Wolverhampton even went as far as re-naming their Mild as Original – still a traditional mild but not by name.

Banks's aren't alone in hiding their light under a bushel. Around 30% of milds currently on sale don't mention the 'm' word in their brand names. These include our own Hook Norton's Dark Mild which is now known as Hooky Dark. Several others milds hide behind the usual strange names some brewers seem prone to. With names like Pressed Rat & Warthog from Triple FFF brewery, Trembling Rabbit (Poachers) and Ambeardextrous (Beartown)

it's easy to find yourself drinking mild without even knowing it. At least Bartrams, in Suffolk, give us a clue with their Marld.

Today there are over 150 regularly produced milds available along with another 20 or so seasonal brews, which represents a small but significant recovery.

Nevertheless, milds are very scarce in some parts of Britain, especially the south, but the style still has its strongholds, namely the North-West and the Midlands. Several milds are brewed in the Manchester area while just about every brewery in the Black Country has at least one. Banks's now brew three and the Olde Swan brewery in Netherton, near Dudley, brews two, one light and the other dark in colour. And Highgate of Walsall once brewed nothing but mild.

With its high concentration of breweries and good pubs, an annual 'Black Country Trip' has become popular with CAMRA branches all over England. The Dudley branch even offer a DIY guide on their website at: www.dudleycamra.org.uk Follow the link to 'Suggested Beer Trails' then 'Dudley Mild'.

Most milds are brewed using dark malts, with caramel often being added, resulting in their characteristic dark brown or black colour. These ingredients give the beer a delicious roasty, slightly sweet flavour and it's the minimal use of hops, and therefore lack of bitterness, in the brew which distinguishes mild from other styles.

But not all milds are dark, and they can range in colour from deep red to amber or straw as with Timothy Taylor Golden Best, which is a re-branded traditional pale mild.



Morland of Abingdon stopped producing a real mild in 1990 leaving just their keg version, above.

Most milds these days have an ABV (alcohol by volume) somewhere between 3 and 4%. This wasn't always the case and, along with other beer styles, alcohol content was once much higher, with most milds in Victorian times weighing in at around 7% ABV.

However, there are several stronger milds available again today. Among these is a beer that has sometimes been described as a world classic. Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild comes out at 6% and is based on an original 1920s recipe. This lovely fruity Black Country mild is produced by the tiny Sarah Hughes Brewery which is situated behind its only tied house, the Beacon Hotel, in Sedgley, West Midlands.

As always, we should beware of impostors. Keg mild and the stuff sometimes found in tins in supermarkets is nothing like the real thing and should be avoided unless desperate.

In the past mild seems rarely to have been bottled as mild as for some reason it was often labelled as brown ale. Brown ale eventually developed into a style of its own and is itself something of a rarity today.

Like stouts, today's bottled milds, especially bottle-conditioned examples, are worth keeping an eye open for. And recently, the increasing interest in bottled beers has led to more milds being bottled. We're unlikely to find them in off-licences or supermarkets in our neck of the woods, but a visit to a specialist beer shop might turn one or two up. But more importantly, look out for milds making special guest appearances in our local pubs during May - remembering, of course, that they may be travelling incognito.

CAMRA has dedicated the month of May to promoting mild, another endangered species when it comes to beer styles.

Details of events organised specially to celebrate mild, a list of regularly brewed milds plus other mild-related items can be found by visiting: www.camra.org.uk/mild

For anyone looking out for the Light & Brown article, this will be in the next issue.

Next issue: Light & Brown



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drinker crawl

Matt Bullock

An intrepid, or maybe mad, quartet turned up on a wet Friday night for our latest Oxford Drinker survey crawl starting in Wood Farm. Thankfully, one of our number had a car, so the journey between pubs was made a lot quicker and easier with very little walking, though I assure you that you can do this on foot in an evening.

We met at the **Corner House**, a Banks's pub on the corner of the Slade and Hollow Way, built in the 1930s for an estate that never materialised, though the area is now well populated and the pub has a large catchment area.

Our last crawl visit to this pub was back in 2003, and little has changed in the intervening years. Though the real fire was not lit on this occasion (we might have appreciated it!), the pub is essentially the same as before, serving a very good pint of Banks's bitter from a handpump, at the Wolverhampton brewery's competitive price of £2.30, and the Original or mild from an electric pump, that none of us tried this time.



Being a Friday night, the music had been wound up to quite a volume in anticipation of the

disco, which was in preparation, but you could still hold a conversation, and plenty of people were doing just that at this early hour. The service was friendly and efficient, the atmosphere pleasant and the beer good, so full marks to the pub on that score. And who are we to complain if the loud music and Friday night disco bring in the crowds? Anything that helps pubs like this to thrive or survive has to be the right way forward.

Our chauffeur then took us into the Lye Valley estate to another classic community pub, the **Fairview**. This pub, as proudly displayed on the wall in an Oxford Mail cutting from the time, was built and opened by Simmonds brewery in 1959. Simmonds had apparently earmarked the site for a pub before the Second World War, and only got round to building it once the estate had been started some twenty years later.



The original layout and many of the features of architect Reginald Southall's building are still intact, and it's a rare survivor of this period of pub design. Check out the original urinals in the gents and those bizarre taps, and marvel at the PVC seating and egg crate ceiling so typical of its decade.

The big screen that dominates the bar area is one of few modern additions. The pub caters for a local trade with good ales and competitively priced food; the former we tried, and the latter we didn't, though John seemed intent on doing so one day.

Beers are Courage Best and Directors, which we expected, and a guest, which we didn't. On this occasion White Horse Bitter was on tap, and very good it was too, and we were informed that a free choice of guest is offered to the landlord, with a variety of beers including Skinners having been tried. CAMRA is very fussy about which pubs are allowed onto its national inventory of historic pub interiors, and although this won't meet the strict criteria, it must surely be preserved as a classic of its time. If you've never been here, then do so.

From here we went to the **Prince of Wales** on Horspath Road, unique (probably) in the fact that despite being owned by Greene King for six years or more, the pub is still badged up in Morrells red and cream and has the remnants of the ale house fever that swept this company before it sold out.



And talking of sold out, we found that there was no real

ale, as both IPA and an another unidentified GK beer had both ceased to be and, rather than stand around with a reluctant half of something less palatable, we broke the golden rule of these crawls and left without any refreshment whatsoever!

The reason we left was not that we were over eager to get to our next pub, which had performed, atrociously on our last crawl. I'm pleased to say that this time the **Cricketers** in Temple Cowley was a million times better.



It was busier for a start, and there were two beers, IPA and Abbot, which were both good, and although there was a smattering of small children who were throwing paper aeroplanes (and some bigger children amongst us who also

joined in) the pub was friendly if a little lacking in atmosphere. On a fine day, I'm told the view from the back garden of this pub is superb, but whilst the Cricketers is "ok", there's still not a lot here to drag me back up the Cowley Road on such a fine clear day to check this for myself.

We knew what to expect at our next pub, the **Marsh Harrier**, as it's been a venue for one of our recent meetings and is a popular pub with many beer drinkers. The pub has settled down since its makeover prior to our last visit, and is a drinking establishment again rather than a gastro pub, serving Fullers Discovery, London Pride and ESB. The local trade seems to have stuck with the pub, which dates back to mid Victorian times, and although not packed to the rafters, there was a healthy number of customers when we called in. I drank the Pride, which was so acceptable I had another, and this and the Discovery seem to be the popular choice here. There's a nice garden here too at the rear for those summer evenings ahead, though the view from the front is less impressive being the City Council's depot, though this

most probably provides the pub with some of its daytime trade. I like this pub, and were I awarding points or stars this time, the Marsh Harrier would do very well indeed.



Our final pub was due to have been the **Exeter Hall** at the junction with Cowley Road. The reason I can't report in any detail was that there was no beer. Only months after having refurbished the pub and installed three beer engines, the beer supply appears to have dried up and none of the ales were available. A band was playing in the lounge, and the pub was pretty busy as a result, but without any beer, few of us seemed inclined to stay. So with that in mind, and bearing in mind it was getting late, we broke the golden rule again and all went our separate ways, after a very enjoyable evening's work.

RICHARD BOSLEY

ACCOUNTANT & CAMRA MEMBER

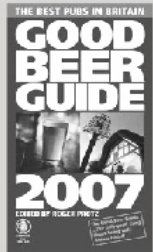
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banbury beer festival

Tony Perry

North Oxfordshire Branch held its annual Beer Festival at the TA Centre, Banbury from 22nd March to 24th March. Oxford City Branch arranged a social visit on the Friday evening, although only a handful of Branch members braved the cold weather to make the trip. 80 beers were on offer, with a good cross section of local brews and small breweries from around the country. The festival had a Scottish theme this year, with 25 of the 80 beers being from Scottish breweries.

Particular favourites of our Branch were the Full Mash Hussars Ale, Milton Dionysus and the Thornbridge Hall Jaipur IPA, with Tryst Brockville Pale also receiving favourable comments. Of course, I couldn't let the evening pass without sampling one of my favourites, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild. However, I was very good, and only had a half. The ribbing I get from previous Black Country trips and the recent visit to Cheltenham Motor Club kept me on the straight and narrow. For me, the personal favourite for the evening was York Decade, brewed to celebrate ten years of brewing by York Brewery.

This year, the festival was held in what looked like a warehouse. With no heating, large metal doors, and a vast hangar-like roof, the main room was very cold. A heated room was provided as the family room, although most people found this a little too warm.



Neil trying not to let the temperature affect his enjoyment of a pint whilst others seem full of good cheer!



The festival enjoyed a good crowd for the Friday night session, and our Branch ended the evening by purchasing a selection of the superb hand made rolls for the train journey home.

I returned on the Saturday morning as a volunteer, and found that the organisers were struggling to keep the beers in tip top condition, due to the cold affecting the yeast. A number of beers had a chill haze on them; nothing wrong with the quality, but the cold temperature we were serving the beer at was sometimes not letting the full flavour of the beers come through.

A few beers were getting very low by Saturday morning – I believe the first to go was the North Cotswold Monarch IPA.

At 10% ABV, it seems the usual beer festival rule of the strongest beers proving most popular was once more observed. Full Mash Hussars Ale and Thornbridge Hall Jaipur IPA were also very low at the start of the Saturday session, thus bearing out the good taste of our Branch members the previous evening.

As Saturday progressed, a reasonable crowd gathered to enjoy the festival, although the temperature remained very cold in the main hall. The crowd thinned out very early on the Saturday evening, and a combination of the cold weather and an England football match were generally agreed as being the main reasons for this. I left just after 9pm to catch the train home, and at that time there were still a number of beers remaining.

All in all then, a very well organised festival, with an excellent selection of beers. We pass on our thanks to our colleagues in the North Oxfordshire Branch, and wish them well for next year's festival. I understand the aim is to keep the themed idea of the festival next year, and return to a weekend in April to try and get some warmer weather. No guarantees there but at least the evenings are longer.

They're Going To Be At It Like Rabbits

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A Beer Swillers "Did You Know ...?" by Hop Bine.

- 1) Most beer is cleared or clarified with a substance extracted from:
 - (a) Beef bones
 - (b) Fish swim bladders
 - (c) Fuller's (diatomaceous) earth
- 2) How many firkins are there in a butt?
- 3) Which English monarch regularly breakfasted on a quart of ale?
 - (a) Edward VII
 - (b) Elizabeth I
 - (c) George III
- 4) Ullage is the term given to waste beer but it is also:
 - (a) The empty space between a liquid and the top of the container
 - (b) The protein content of beer
 - (c) A seaweed beer from a Welsh monastic isle
- 5) A tut is:
 - (a) A medieval measure equal to approximately 4 pints
 - (b) A piece of plastic knocked out when broaching a cask
 - (c) The spike used to remove a shive from the cask
- 6) Who said "Give my people plenty of beer, good beer and cheap beer, and you will have no revolution amongst them"?
 - (a) Fidel Castro
 - (b) Tsar Nicholas II
 - (c) Queen Victoria
- 7) In 1911, the famous escapologist Harry Houdini had to be rescued from a huge vat of Tetley Beer? True or False.

Have a go then turn to page 20 to check your answers.

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inn and around oxford

The Yates in George Street has now closed permanently and been replaced by a **Slug and Lettuce** pub, part of the Laurel Pub Group. The good news is it actually has cask ale! – an improvement on Yates, which had none. Mind you, it is only one and it is London Pride at £2.95 a pint. One was sampled – it was fine and kept at the right temperature, not chilled. Also, the pub is now completely non-smoking. When visited, they were only permitting customers on the ground floor and the first floor staircase was cordoned off. There was the usual array of draft continental filtered beers including Becks, Vier, Peroni, Amstel, Artois Bock and Peeterman Artois. Food is served 10.00am to 10.00pm but the food sampled was disappointing - rather bland and tasteless, small portions and no sauce. The young female staff attempted to appear to be attentive but looked rather bored. More than £250,000 was spent on the refurbishment. The decor is a modern walnut colour scheme with shining brown leather seating. The toilets are quite impressive with an enormous mirror in the gents. I only hope it is shatterproof as the class of customer that formerly frequented Yates would, we fear, make short shrift of it.

In December we reported that the **Ampleforth Arms** in Risinghurst was under new management, with a trio from Essex taking the reins.

Unfortunately it seems they have already been 'unseated' by the demands of running a successful pub. We believe the cook of the trio left first and this was the start of the end. That and the prices they were charged by the owners perhaps?



The Friar on Old Marston Road, currently an Arkells house, has been a troubled establishment for some months now. Recently Arkells installed a locum manager (a very knowledgeable chap) and closed off part of the pub and one bar so it was easier to oversee all 'activities' in the pub. The pub is now closed for refurbishment and Arkells are in negotiations to sell it to Vale.



Contracts have not yet been exchanged but Vale are hopeful that the sale will happen very shortly. They apparently intend to put 10 hand-pumps into the pub(!)

and try to reproduce the formula that has been so successful for them at the Hop Pole in Aylesbury. The re-opening is expected in May/June. We look forward to seeing whether their ambitious plans come to fruition.

The **Six Bells**, Headington Quarry, is going back to a leasehold rather than managed pub, if suitable tenants can be found with deep pockets.

The **Chequers**, also in the Quarry, has been sold and is due to reopen as a food pub, whatever that might mean. Let's hope they find a menu to attract the right customers.

We have received news from an impeccably reliable source in the Oxford licensed trade that the **Market Tavern**, Market Street, will close shortly and, like the Wharf House, become but a memory on the Oxford pub scene. It is understood that the premises will be converted into a Japanese sushi restaurant. While on the subject of Japanese restaurants it was noticed that Gashi Gashi on the Cowley Road, which used to have some unusual Japanese bottled beers, has unfortunately closed.

The Brickworks on Cowley Road is to reopen under new ownership probably sometime in April. It is unlikely it will have any cask ale (it used to do keg Everards).

continued overleaf

However, the new owner says they will stock bottled beers from small UK breweries.



It is rumoured that the company currently negotiating the purchase of the **Elm Tree**, Cowley Road is the same one that runs the Dancing Dragon in Summertown (formerly the Red Lion). If that is the case, and it becomes an EAMAYL (eat as much as you like) buffet Chinese restaurant, all may not be lost as far as cask ale is concerned. The Dancing Dragon does a decent pint of Adnams Broadside at £2.50 a pint.



I believe the Gardeners Arms in Plantation Road is the only vegetarian pub in Oxford city but the **Exeter Hall** (on the corner of Marsh Road and

Oxford Road in Cowley), which already has a reputation as a state of the art live music venue, must be the only pub I know in Oxford (or Oxfordshire) to offer a food menu which claims to be 100% free range/organic. This even includes an organic/vegetarian pick your own breakfast and organic/free range Sunday roast dinners. Food is served from Monday to Sunday between 12 noon and 3.00pm, and 6.00pm and 8.00pm. So far no organic beer (bottle or cask) but watch this space.



The Trout in Wolvercote has recently had an extensive refurbishment and re-opened for business a few weeks ago. Incredibly the expenditure on the refit came to just over a million pounds with apparently most of it going on the kitchen and cellar. There are no structural alterations as the building is listed. The decor features stone fired ovens, log burning fires, deep leather seating and spacious teak furnishings. The toilets, which are fully tiled, are adequate but not spectacular. The Trout is now a fully non-smoking pub.

Now for the real news – the

Trout is no longer part of **any** pub group. It is now under private ownership and a free house. It is owned by two guys who are both called Paul and for some mysterious reason wish to keep their identity under wraps. The only other information that was divulged was that the pair also own The Orange Tree in Lapworth, Warwickshire. We believe that Mitchells and Butlers own the pub and probably leased to the aforementioned 'Pauls'.

With regard to food, the menu is typical gastro pub comfort food but quite extensive. There is also a separate selective menu of daily specials. The food sampled was adequate and professionally presented, and the whole meal enjoyable. With regard to cask beer there was only Timothy Taylor Landlord at £2.90 a pint. However, Adnams Bitter will soon also be available. There is a reasonable selection of bottled beers including Innes and Gunn and Bellevue Kriek. A pint of Landlord was sampled and it was perfect, exactly as it should be but often isn't.

With regard to continental draft beers there is Staropramen, Leffe Blond, Amstel and two unusual offerings – Birra Moretti (Italian) 4.5% at £1.60 a half (brewery established 1859) and an unfiltered Austrian wheat beer, Edelweiss 5.5% at £1.70 a half (Hofbrau Kaltenhausen brewery established 1475). Both were tried and enjoyed. We wait to see if the new owners will open up the bridge although we understand the island is protected, as it is a bird sanctuary.

The **Ock Mill** pub and restaurant in Marcham Road, Abingdon, re-opened recently following a £400,000 refurbishment. The revamp was part of a £45million investment to transform all 158 outlets in the Beefeater chain.



The **Railway Inn**, beside Culham station (which comes under the umbrella of Oxford City CAMRA), has recently had a change of ownership. Two Indian restaurant owners – Abdul Mannan and Abdul Harque – have purchased it. The partners claim that they will retain the pub area but intend to transform the dining room into an "exceptional experience" (whatever that means). They also plan to put up a marquee for private functions and have organised entertainment, which will include belly dancing. Historically, the Railway Hotel opened in 1842 as Isambard Brunel began building the railway, from the main line at Didcot, to Oxford. The hotel later changed its name to The Jolly Porter. This apparently was a truly ironic title as it was named after a notoriously miserable member of staff at Culham station. Whatever happens here I think we can safely predict that it is the kiss of death for the Railway Inn as a community type pub.

The **Romany Inn** in Bampton has seen a change of

landlord. Richard Common (ex-New Inn, Crawley) has left after only nine months. It is still a Punch Taverns concern. The new landlord had a stint at the Swan, Lechlade for a short while. The new tenancy is recent and complicated so no changes are manifesting themselves at time of going to press. Hopefully the cask beer will show an improvement in variability and choice. One of the first happenings has been a clean-up and repainting of the cellar – good start!

Burford Brewery now has a new brew in their portfolio - Cotswold Boy - a lighter session bitter at 3.8% ABV. This is a slightly drier beer and more of a fruity nose to the flagship brew Burford Bitter at 4.3% ABV. They have had a recent problem keeping up supplies to the west, along the A40, supplying pubs for the Cheltenham Races. Regular supplies are made in Oxford to the Lamb & Flag, Far from the Madding Crowd and the Turf Tavern. Also they are suppliers of Heck's (traditional farmhouse cider & perry) in five gallon pins and eventually in bottles.

Missed an issue of
the
Oxford Drinker?

Seen an interesting
article that you want
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All issues of the Oxford Drinker
will now be available on the Ox-
ford City CAMRA website, in-
cluding some back issues

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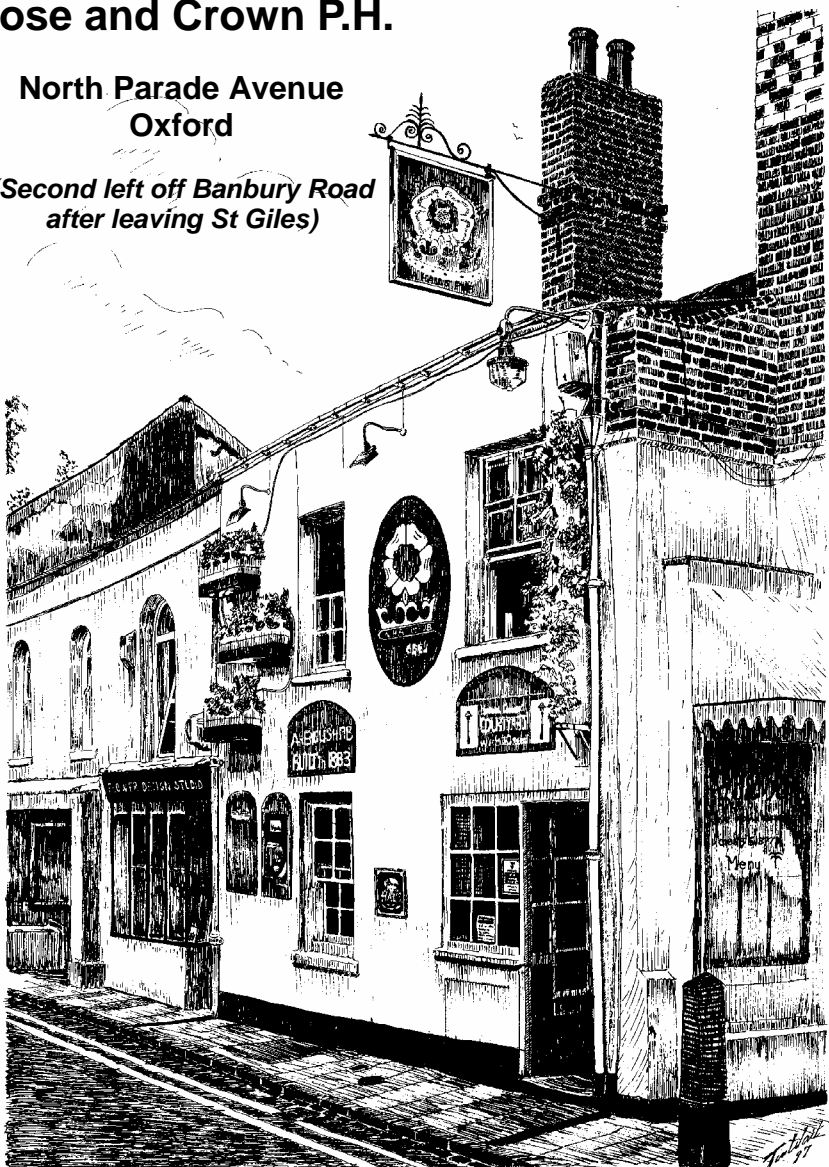
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Oxford City CAMRA Pub of the Year 2001

Listed in the Good Pub Guide 2006

www.rose-n-crown.co.uk

what's on

Neil Hoggarth

Monday 16th April
7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Plough, 98 High Street, Witney
(nr bridge over River Windrush)
Usually 3 or 4 well-kept cask
ales.

Monday 23rd April
6.30pm

Pub survey trip

Rural pub survey trip by car -
call branch contact to book a
place and get rendezvous
instructions.

Monday 30th April
6pm

Branch Social

White Horse Brewery Trip by
mini-bus.

Saturday 29th May
Daytime

Branch Social and Mild Month crawl

Visit to Oxford by Surrey/
Hants Borders CAMRA
branch and celebration of Mild
Month.

Monday 21st May
7.30pm

Branch Meeting

The Railway, 24 Station Road,
Wheatley

Sat 2nd June
Daytime

Black Country Crawl

Popular yearly trip to Black
Country pubs by train and
bus.

Monday 18th June
7.30pm

Branch Meeting and Pub of the Year Presentation

General Elliot, Manor Road,
South Hinksey, Oxford

*Branch meetings begin at
7.30pm and the branch
currently meets on the **third**
Monday of each month. Social
events and pub crawls are
held regularly.*

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

6X equality



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did you know?

ANSWERS

1. (b) Fish swim bladders. Originally sturgeon but now Nile carp or tropical catfish.
2. A firkin is 9 gallons and a butt is 108 gallons so there are 12 firkins per butt.
3. (b) Elizabeth I
4. (a) The empty space between the liquid and the top of a container.
5. (b) The piece of plastic (usually) broken through from the shive or keystone (vent or tap) when tapping a cask.
6. (c) Queen Victoria.
7. True. He was overcome by the alcohol - must have been better beer than their current brews.

brewers' phrases

Before thermometers were invented, brewers would dip a thumb or finger into the maturing brew to find the right temperature for adding yeast. Too cold, and the yeast wouldn't grow. Too hot, and the yeast would die. This thumb in the beer is where "**rule of thumb**" comes from.

In English pubs, ale was ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them to mind their own pints and quarts and settle down. It's where we get the phrase "**mind your P's and Q's**".

After consuming a bucket or two of vibrant brew they called *aul*, or *ale*, the Vikings would

head fearlessly into battle, often without their armour or even their shirts. The term "**berserk**" means "bare shirt" in Norse, and eventually took on the meaning of their wild battles.

The term "**toddlers**" originated in England. There were impurities in the drinking water that disallowed the water to be used for drinking. A common alternative drink was beer (it was cheap, plentiful and the water used to make it was treated during the initial boiling during brewing). Toddlers, just weaning off of mothers milk were unaccustomed to the effects of beer. This coupled with the fact that they were just learning how to walk really made them toddle.

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LAGERBOY,
AFRAID YOU MIGHT
TASTE SOMETHING?”



mild month of may what's it all about?



MAY has once again been designated Mild Month by the Campaign for Real Ale. This annual event is a celebration of Mild, a beer style applauded by those in the know but increasingly difficult to find at the bar.

CAMRA's 197 branches nationwide will be taking part in Mild Month and running events to promote Mild in May. This may include a crawl around pubs in the local area that sell mild, promotion of mild at beer festivals, or persuading local pubs to stock mild and get drinkers to try a pint.

Oxford City CAMRA branch are celebrating Mild Month with a joint pub crawl with members of Surrey/Hants borders CAMRA to try the milds on offer in the Oxford area on Saturday 29 May – keep an eye on the Oxford City CAMRA website for further details or ring one of the contacts listed.

CAMRA press officer Owen Morris said: "The number of breweries rediscovering the delights of mild is on the increase, but unfortunately it is still not widely available in pubs. Consumers who love and miss mild, or even those who are simply curious to try it, should ask

for it in their local pub. By letting licensees and breweries know that there is a demand for this flavoursome dark beer we will see it make a comeback at the bar."

So what is a 'mild'?

See Richard Queralt's article on pages 4 and 5 for a detailed answer. Here is CAMRA HQ's view:

Mild is one of the most traditional beer styles which is enjoying a revival in today's real ale market. Usually dark brown in colour, due to the use of well-roasted malts or barley it is less hopped than bitters and often has a chocolaty character with nutty and burnt flavours.

Cask conditioned Mild is a rarity in a lot of parts of the country, which is a crying shame, because Mild is a distinctive and tasty beer. Mild is one of, if not the, oldest beer styles in the country.

Until the 15th century, ale and mead were the major British brews, both made without hops. Hops were introduced from Holland, France and Germany after this time. This also started the trend on reducing the gravity of ale, as the Hop is also a preservative, and beers had to be brewed very strongly to try to help preserve them. The hop also started the rapid decline of mead, which is only made in a

very few places today.

During the First World War, malt rationing and pressure from the temperance movement led to brewers rapidly reduced the strength. Following the Second World War, as prosperity returned, mild's popularity as a cheap ale began to fade, not being helped by being kept badly in run down pubs as the Big Brewers began to heavily promote their keg lager brands. Coupled to this was a gradual, but steady decline in heavy industry in the North and Midlands of Britain, mild's great marketplace.

For Landlords: Packs including promotional material for Mild Month are available from CAMRA HQ. The packs include posters with space to have details of events filled in, and Mild Month leaflets. To order packs call 01727 867201 or email: gillian.dale@camra.org.uk.

For Drinkers: The CAMRA website also includes a section dedicated to mild at www.camra.org.uk/mild. The website includes a description of mild, seasonal and regularly available milds, cooking with milds, and will include details of Mild Month events coming up in your area.

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale

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Complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive three months membership free and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription. Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.



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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 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