



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

issue 49  
December 2007 - January 2008



# the Oxford Drinker

## Calling all real ale drinkers

All of CAMRA's members are highly valued. Without you the organisation would not exist, but did you know that CAMRA membership can mean so much more than your monthly copy of What's Brewing or the occasional trip to the local beer festival?

CAMRA is a very active organisation full of vibrant personalities getting involved in many different ways. From taking part in local pub surveys, distributing membership leaflets to running local and national beer festivals, the work is varied, challenging, but most of all, enjoyable. There is of course an element of commitment to volunteering but ultimately it is like-minded individuals working together and having fun that really encourages members to keep giving their valuable time.

Why bother? Well, without

more individuals getting involved actively, CAMRA will struggle to continue to grow and develop. Local branches are always looking for new faces to join in at meetings or social events and would be very happy to hear from you. So why not become a more active part of CAMRA? It is rewarding, fun and will no doubt at some point involve having a few pints. What could be better?

So how do you find out more? Contacting your local branch is a great start. They will know what is going on in your area and be able advise you on what activities are coming up that you may like to get involved with. Contact details can be found in the CAMRA Near You section at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or in the back of What's Brewing.

Not sure which branch you

are in? Contact CAMRA HQ: [camra@camra.org.uk](mailto:camra@camra.org.uk) or by telephoning 01727 867201 and we will gladly help you.

Members in the Oxford branch area can go straight to the branch's website at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk) for contact information and the branch diary.

Sign up to our electronic mailing list to receive e-mails of the pub news as it happens and the latest details of social events.  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists.php](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists.php)

If you're not a member and would like to join, use the application form in this magazine. Or use the websites and phone number above.

Stuck for a Christmas present idea.....

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the free newsletter of the  
Oxford City Branch of CAMRA  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

# beer festival diary



Tuesday 4 - Saturday 8  
December  
**Winter Beer Festival**  
Far from the Madding  
Crowd,  
Friars Entry, Oxford  
01865 240900  
[www.maddingcrowd.co.uk](http://www.maddingcrowd.co.uk)

Tuesday 4 - Saturday 8  
December  
**Pig's Ear Beer & Cider  
Festival**  
Ocean, Mare St, Hackney,  
London E8  
0208 806 6517

Saturday 8 December  
**Haddenham Winterfest**  
Tithe Barn, Manor Farm,  
Haddenham  
11am-5pm (note early  
finish)  
26+ real ales, lagers and  
ciders

Tickets £3.00 in advance,  
or £3.50 on the door,  
available from  
Blooming Fruity,  
Parminers, The Kings  
Head, The Red Lion, The  
Rose &  
Thistle, The Rising Sun  
and Fore Golf, Thame.

Proceeds will go to The  
Florence Nightingale  
Hospice and supporting  
projects for village clubs &  
organisations  
[www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk](http://www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk)

16 – 19 January 2008  
**CAMRA National Winter  
Ales Festival**  
Manchester  
(see details at end)

Friday 15 - Saturday 16  
February  
**Merton Winter Beer  
Festival**  
Merton Village Hall, Islip  
Road, Merton, Oxon  
6-11pm Fri; noon-11pm Sat

16 beers and 5 Ciders/  
Perrys.

**National Winter Ales  
Festival 2008**  
The National Winter Ales  
Festival will take place at  
the New Century Hall,  
Manchester from  
Wednesday 16th - Saturday  
19th January 2008.

The Festival is organised  
by CAMRA to showcase a  
wide range of beer styles,  
particularly those winter  
warmers which are so  
popular with beer drinkers  
during the winter months.  
With a selection of 200  
beers, real ale in a bottle,  
ciders and perrys you will  
be able to find something  
which suits your tastes.

As well as promoting an  
appreciation of winter ales,  
the Festival also plays host

to the Champion Winter  
Beer of Britain competition,  
and the winners will be  
announced on Thursday  
January 17th. Winners of  
this competition will see  
sales of their beer soar as  
a result. Both brewers and  
festival visitors alike will  
eagerly anticipate the  
competition  
announcement.



Opening Times and Prices:

Wednesday 16th January  
5.30pm - 10.30pm £3.  
NUS, OAP & other  
concessionary £1  
Thursday 17th January  
5pm - 10.30pm £3

Friday 18th January 12  
noon - 5pm £3. Note: no  
access to downstairs bar.

Friday 18th January 5pm -  
10.30pm £4

Saturday 19th January 12  
noon - 10.30pm

# beer festival

diary *continued*

CAMRA members £1 off at all times.

For further details go to:  
[www.winterales.uku.co.uk](http://www.winterales.uku.co.uk)

Or:  
<http://winteralesfestival.blogspot.com/>

Further details and updates are available on our FESTIVALS webpage at  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

Missed an issue of the Oxford Drinker?

Seen an interesting article you want to read again?

All new issues of the Oxford Drinker are now available on the Oxford City CAMRA website, including some back issues

[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

## 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 & December. 3000 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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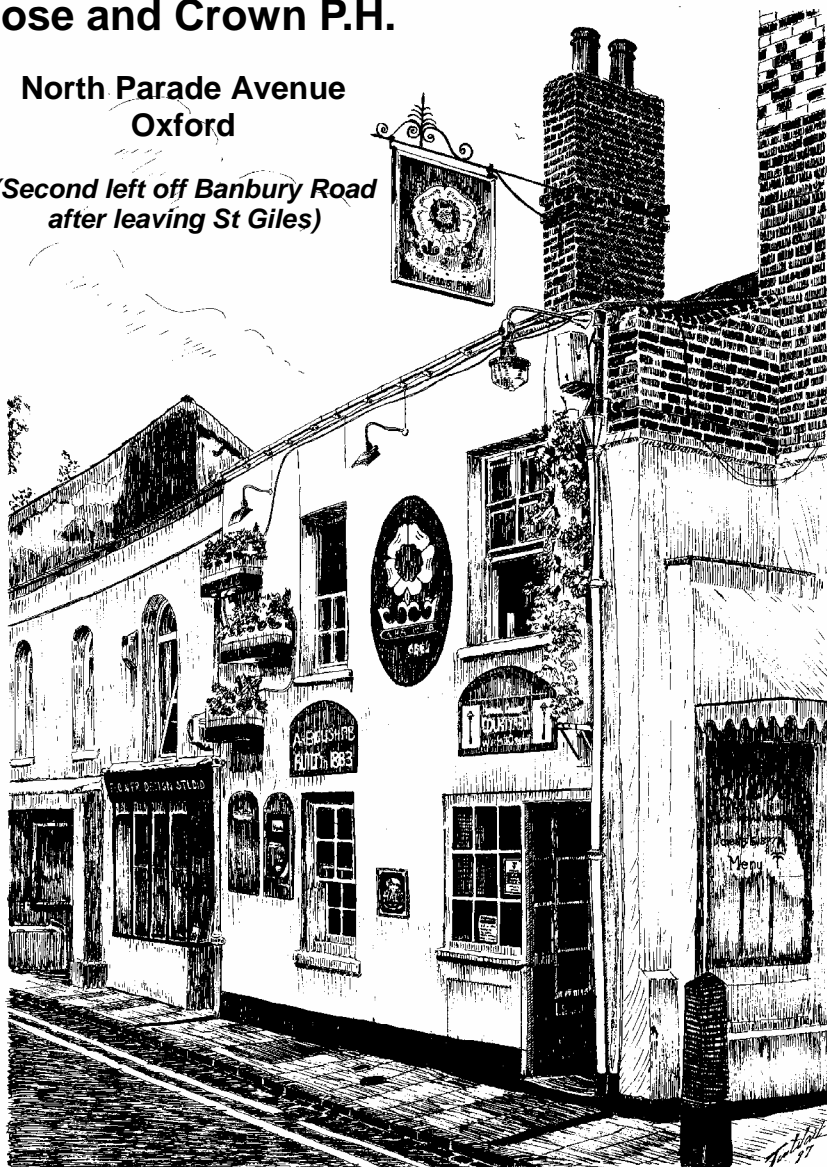
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The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the branch or CAMRA limited.  
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## Rose and Crown P.H.

North Parade Avenue  
Oxford

*(Second left off Banbury Road  
after leaving St Giles)*



Oxford City CAMRA Pub of the Year 2001  
Listed in the Good Pub Guide 2006  
[www.rose-n-crown.co.uk](http://www.rose-n-crown.co.uk)

# what the victorians did for us - birmingham revisited

**Birmingham Trip: Matt Bullock**

The history of the English public house is a long and complex one, and for centuries governments have felt obliged to intervene in respect of opening hours, staff working conditions, the impact of drinking (and, of course, smoking) on the health and financial wealth of the poorer classes, and the moral position of the pub in society.

Nowhere in the country was this more apparent than in Victorian Birmingham, where a domination of Quakers and Unitarians, sat in the recently-constructed council house, attempted to apply strong interventionist policies across the whole city. The Quakers themselves were, of course, totally against alcohol and pubs. Hence the garden suburb of Bourneville, built by the Quakers around the Cadbury chocolate factory, was completely devoid of public houses. But their ideals were spread more widely across the city. An attempt by Joseph Chamberlain to take all brewing under municipal control in 1877 failed, and the Council quickly realised they could not persuade the Birmingham public to quit alcohol and abandon the very popular public houses, so they encouraged a new generation of pubs to change the whole image of the industry, which in itself generated a new architectural genre that we can still see today.

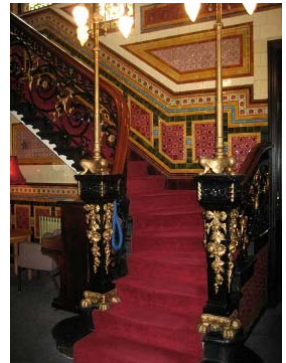
Instrumental in this new era of

public house design was a Birmingham firm called James Lister and Lea. Though by no means the only firm producing pub designs in the city at the time, James Lister and Lea worked for all four of the city's major breweries - Holts, Mitchells, Davenport and Ansells - and were responsible for hundreds of pubs in the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, all overflowing with architectural details borrowed from Gothic, Tudor and Jacobean times, and laden with terracotta, stained glass and acres of colourful Minton tiling. The reasoning behind this grand architectural quality was to convey to the customer a message of what sort of custom it attracted and of what type of establishment it was, and, of course, what sort it most definitely was not.

Many of James Lister and Lea's buildings were re-builds of older pubs, and most occupied prominent corner sites. The finest of their creations can be found in what was the Gooch estate to the south and east of the city centre. Key amongst these are the **Woodman**, Albert Street (1897), the **Market Tavern** (1899), the **Anchor**, Rea Street (1902) and the **White Swan** on Bradford Street (1899), all in the neo-Jacobean style.

Perhaps their most famous creation - the **Bartons Arms** - lies to the North of the City and stood next to the Aston Hippodrome, another of Lister and Lea's creations.

The Bartons, today a Grade 2\* listed building, dates from 1901, and epitomises the style which had been developed over the past decade. Built for Mitchells and Butlers as their flagship pub, this neo-Jacobean gem is said to have been inspired by the nearby Aston Hall; an imposing brick and stone exterior with a clock tower and, internally, rich mahogany woodwork, engraved mirrors, superb stained glass, snob screens, a huge wrought iron staircase and wall to wall Minton-Hollins tiling in an array of bold, striking colours and designs.



Ten years ago, boarded up and long-since abandoned, the Bartons' fate hung in the balance, but since being rescued by an unusual saviour, for Birmingham at least - Oakham Brewery of Peterborough - the pub has been restored to its former glory and is the jewel in the crown of the north Birmingham pub scene.

It was for the reason of visiting some of these fine Victorian creations that a group of us set



off from Oxford last month. Our numbers severely depleted by illness, we nevertheless bought ourselves an excellent value £3 bus ticket and took out first journey on a number 51 towards Newtown, and to the **Bartons Arms**.



These days, after much demolition and redevelopment, the Bartons stands somewhat forlornly next to a dual carriageway, surrounded by 1970s deprivation, in an area you probably wouldn't wish to hang around alone at night. By day, however, it's a bit more acceptable, and on entering the pub we were all astounded by the beauty of the interior, sunshine streaming through the stained glass, illuminating the detail and the sumptuous colours.

Naturally, we weren't just here to ogle the architectural delights: we wanted fine ale too! Champion beer Hobson's Mild was most people's first choice, and good it was too, and this was complemented by Green Jack Canary and three Oakham beers, the ever-popular JHB being sampled by most, too. It was Saturday lunchtime, and the

pub was quiet, which allowed us all to take in the wonderful surroundings.

Don't think for one minute that all Birmingham's pubs are opulent Victorian gems. Birmingham was an industrial city, and many of the back-street local pubs escaped the late Victorian makeover, as the major brewers would only spend money, and significant sums at that, as an ornate piece of self-advertisement on the buildings that people would see often. Our next pub necessitated a torturous bus journey through some less than salubrious housing estates into Hockley to the **Black Eagle** on the appropriately named Factory Road.



This fine pub is best approached from the city by Metro (Soho Benson Road stop) and sits on the edge of the Jewellery Quarter, one of Birmingham's specialities, and which still thrives as an area of many cottage industries despite being very much on the city's growing tourist trail. The Black Eagle is a superb, small, multi-roomed pub, which has a homely feel to it compared with the grandeur of the Bartons, though it can still boast some Minton tiling which

was, it seems, an essential of the time. The pub was busy and the welcome most warm, as we sat in a bay window seat enjoying Taylor Landlord, Batham's Bitter, Burton Bridge Sovereign Gold, and even, for one brave soul, a pint of Ansells Mild. A local Pub of the Year winner on many occasions, the Black Eagle is one of the finest suburban pubs you'll find anywhere.

Most of us overlooked the Bathams at the Black Eagle intending to try some at the **Church Inn**, on Great Hampton Street in the Jewellery Quarter, but this was unexpectedly shut so we moved on through the city centre and into Highgate to the **Lamp Tavern**.



Again, the surroundings are less than scenic, being located close to the wholesale markets; the pub sits at a junction of four shabby streets of warehouses and industrial premises. Nevertheless, the welcome is always warm from the Irish host, and we again occupied a window seat while the smattering of afternoon custom watched horse racing on the small

television. We drank Stanway Stanney Bitter (a little disappointing, if I'm honest), Bazens Picture Perfect, Hanby On Target and Church End Mild. The pub itself is comfortable, cosy if unremarkable, the only survivor of a small terrace of houses, with a large, long front room and a live music venue to the rear.

From the Lamp it's a short walk to the **Anchor**, another of Lister & Lea's mock-Jacobean creations, and a favourite of ale drinkers for its fine choice of real ales. Much of the Victorian decoration has been lost here, but the original layout still survives with a back room and a small snug bar as well as the main L-shaped main room. The pub has been in the Keane family for many years, and current licensee Gerry has built up a reputation for his ales that was for a while unsurpassed in the city. On this occasion there were around twelve beers available, which I won't list here, but suffice to say there was enough to keep even the fussiest of drinkers happy.



The Anchor was built for Ansell's, as was the **White Swan** up the road on Bradford Street. Here the Lister & Lea interior has survived intact, and again the walls are awash with colourful Minton glazed tiles, the ceilings are ornately

plastered and the fittings made from fine, sturdy polished mahogany. The pub is now a Banks's house, selling Jennings beers alongside a guest, this being Hydes Jekyll's Gold.

With time moving on apace, we set off back to the city centre for a few beers before the train home. We enjoyed a pint of Fuller's London Porter in the **Old Joint Stock**, the former Lloyd's Bank building opposite the Cathedral, which displays a different sort of opulence with its glass dome, painted murals and hugely-over scaled bar fitting; we popped down to the newly refurbished **Old Contemptibles** where Taylor's Landlord was the best of a range of national brands, and we finished on Bennetts Hill, which is handily placed for the railway station.

**The Wellington** has had a monopoly of the local pub of the year competition since it re-opened a couple of years ago. The pub used to be not dissimilar to the Old Contemptibles - a high-ceilinged Edwardian pub with polished wood and a distinguished, if a little tired, feel to it. Since its refurbishment, the Wellington is a beer tickers' paradise, with 17 beers available, and whilst I would not fault the quality of the beer, I feel the pub is impersonal - you order beer by its number displayed on an electronic screen - and would not fit the criteria I would use for a Pub of the Year award.

We debated this point hotly over a pint, the pub's supporters applauding what the pub had done for real ale, and its detractors, me included, comparing it to a soul-less

Wetherspoons, set up for beer ticking in tidy but average surroundings.

We continued our debate down the hill at the **Briar Rose**, a Wetherspoons, no less, where getting served was the biggest difficulty, but as we begged to differ, a truce was agreed and no more was said on the journey home!

Perhaps the Briar Rose and Wellington type of pub are the future, but the Victorian pub has not had its day, and in my book you'll never better the likes of the Black Eagle, where the cosy atmosphere and personal welcome can never be matched by its bigger city centre rivals.

As we contemplated this in a state of happy inebriation, we became aware that one era had come to an end that day. Our train was the last ever scheduled service to be run by Virgin Cross Country. The following day, someone else would have the franchise, the staff would wear new uniforms and have new employers, and new logos would obliterate the Virgin name; out with the old and in with the new. Let's hope the classic Victorian pub does not suffer the same fate.

# what's on

Matt Bullock



*Meetings are now held on a rota basis Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday throughout the year. 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](mailto:social@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

**Tuesday 4 December**  
**6.30pm**

**Minibus Survey Trip**

Meet at Lamb & Flag, St Giles  
*Please book a seat for this trip to allow us to source an appropriately sized vehicle.*

**Friday 7 December**  
**7.00pm**

**Social at the Far From the Madding Crowd**

**Winter Beer Festival**

Far from the Madding Crowd, 10-12 Friars Entry, Oxford. Festival runs from Tuesday 4th to Saturday 8th December.  
[www.maddingcrowd.co.uk](http://www.maddingcrowd.co.uk);  
01865 240900

**Wednesday 12 December**  
**7.30pm**

**Branch Meeting**

The Bricklayers, Marston

**Friday 21 December**  
**7.30pm**

**Christmas Social**

Meet at Carfax (outside HSBC) for a pub crawl

**Saturday 12 January 2008**  
**Eynsham and Witney bus trip**

Meet at George Street stop A3 at noon. Start at the New Inn, Corn Street, Witney, then work our way back to Oxford via Eynsham.

**Monday 21 January**  
**7.30pm**

**Branch meeting**

*Venue to be confirmed*

**Saturday 9 February 2008**  
**All Day Trip**

**Beer Festival Helpers Trip**

Destination: Leicester and Rugby.

Free trip for all those who worked at the Beer Festival. A limited number of tickets may be available to non-helpers nearer the date.

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# beer festival reports



First of all, apologies to staff at The Masons Arms in Headington Quarry. Members of the branch visited the beer festival there a couple of months ago. I even have some evidence of an early stage in the proceedings. Unfortunately, the all had such a good time they forgot (were unable) to write anything down. Must try harder!



Neil Hoggarth: I missed the first **Swan Inn Beer Festival**, Islip, last year because I was away, but I had heard good things about it from friends who were able to attend. I was pleased to hear that the event was returning this year. Islip is easy to reach on the train from Oxford so I popped over on the Saturday afternoon.

The Swan was taken over by Richard and Kathy a couple of years ago and has been building a reputation for its beer and live music events since then. It is a Greene King tenancy so, to be honest, I was expecting the beer list to be made up of the usual GK brands and guests. However, I was very pleased to find that Richard and Kathy had stood their ground with the company and explained that the event was only worth doing if they could offer a range of beer that people couldn't normally get. There were 10 beers on the festival stillage, and only two

came from the GK stable (Greene King Swing Low 4.3%, Ruddles Hedgerow 4.2% and Ridley's Old Bob 5.1%) and only one from the normal GK guest list (Tom Woods Bomber County 4.8%). The other ales were all from small breweries and covered a good variety of flavours and styles. There were a couple of milds (Vale Black Swan 3.9% and Triple FFF Pressed Rat & Warthog 4.2%), a couple of hoppy beers (Twickenham Sundancer 3.7% and Milk Street Amarillo 4.3%), and a couple of well-balanced premium bitters (Acorn Sovereign 4.4% and Brewdog The Physics 5%).



If I had to pick a favourite I would probably point to the Sundancer, but all the beers were excellent and in very good condition. It was also nice to see one real cider on offer: Thatcher's Cheddar Valley, 6%. Pricing was flat-rate, with four half-pint beer tokens costing £5.

The beer was set up in the separate function room at the back of the pub, which I hadn't seen before. It has been very nicely refurbished recently - surprisingly the previous tenants had only used it for storage and apparently there was twenty years worth of junk piled up there when Richard and Kathy moved in!

The function room was pretty quiet during Saturday afternoon, as the Rugby World Cup was on, but the pub was full of people watching the game and many were nipping out the back to pick up beers from the festival bar before returning to continue watching. I am told that they had a good crowd in on Friday night, and when I left for my train on early Saturday evening the festival was beginning to fill up again. The evening's attractions included a pig roast and live music from the Karl Demata band. Highly recommended: look out for number three!

Matt Bullock: **The Old Bookbinders** in Jericho hosted its Beer Festival in October. Fifteen beers were on sale from Thursday to Saturday, as well as two real ciders and a perry. A visit on Friday night was rewarded with some fine beers. West Berkshire Magg's Magnificent Mild 3.8%, a full-bodied, creamy roast malt mild, was a fine beer to start with, and I followed this with Greene King's XX Mild 3.0%, which packs a lot of flavour in such a low gravity beer, if it lacks some of the body of the Magg's version. After this, I switched to golden beers, beginning with the excellent Butler's Oxfordshire Bitter 3.6% and grabbing a half of Rebellion Spooks 4.0% before it sold out. Loddon Hulabaloo had been finished on the Thursday, so next I tried Greene King's Swing Low 4.3% which was disappointing, and Olde Trip, which was better, but the best was saved until last when

North Cotswold Winter Solstice 4.5% became available, and this mid-brown biscuity winter warmer was a fitting finale to the night.



A return visit on the Saturday allowed me to consume some more of the Winter Solstice and a taste of the White Horse Wayland Smithy, though I didn't try any of the dozen malt whiskies available! Hopefully licensees Matty and Maureen will be encouraged by the crowds in evidence on the Friday night and will repeat this

excellent event in the near future.

Matt Bullock: A nostalgic trip back to the town of my birth this was not, but my many friends who still live in **Solihull** organise a fine **beer festival** each year in the British Legion Club in the Town Centre. Solihull has always lacked real ale choice, so the beer festival is always popular with locals who appreciate the range of beers on offer.

Pride of place this year went to two brews made by local breweries with the help of local branch members. Tunnel Solihull Silver Shield 4.8% was brewed by two branch members to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Solihull CAMRA branch, and is also available in limited edition bottles, and Church End Pilgrim Father and Son 3.8% was

brewed by father and son Bob and Ken Jackson using Pilgrim hops grown in their own garden. Not surprisingly, these two rare brews were the first to sell out, but there was plenty more to enjoy in a range totalling 30 beers. Highlights were the Pale, citrus All Gates Young Pretender 3.8%, Pictish Mandela 4.7% brewed with American hops and some more familiar favourites such as Crouch Vale Brewers Gold and Thornbridge Jaipur IPA.

Having had my fill on Friday night, I did my bit behind the bar on the Saturday lunchtime and by 9pm all the beer had sold out. Fortunately, the British Legion Club Bar stocks real ales, so several firkins of their beer were consumed by the thirsty crowd as they were entertained by an Irish folk band.

# The Masons Arms

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



# Oxford beer festival



## Tasting notes



Trying singlehandedly to put the smoke back into pubs



A confused wet dog lost in a chinese takeaway

Jeremy Dennis



Pale: Scandinavian. The tea of beers



Spicy, Tasty, and comfortingly warm



The official brew for Conker champions



6.66 %!



Should track down that irritating bug or niggle



Perfect for ghost-hunting (or as a prelude to spirits)



XX Jeremy



# did you know.....?



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

- 1) The Burton Union is:
  - (a) A pub group in Burton-on-Trent
  - (b) A coupling for a beer engine
  - (c) A fermentation system
- 2) The trademark emblem for the late Morland Brewery in Abingdon was:
  - (a) Ox horns - as displayed by the Traditional Abingdon Morris Dancers
  - (b) An artist
  - (c) A huntsman
- 3) What is the difference between whisky and whiskey?
- 4) What is Red Eye:
  - (a) A facial feature associated with a hangover
  - (b) A cocktail using beer
  - (c) The windowed hatch in some brewing kettles
- 5) To punish drunkards, Sultan Sullivan I would:
  - (a) Have them ducked in a vat of sour wine
  - (b) Tattoo the words "I am a drunken demon" on them
  - (c) Pour molten lead down their throats
- 6) Fullers produce a beer called ESB. What is the meaning of ESB?
- 7) The term "sunstruck" is used to describe::
  - (a) An enhanced sensitivity to ultra-violet light caused by the effect of alcohol with certain medication
  - (b) The effect of sunlight to reduce a foam, or 'head', on beer
  - (c) The over-exposure of beer to bright light and resulting flavour effect
- 8) Which is the odd one out?
  - (a) Bear Ass
  - (b) Pandamonium
  - (c) Ginger Bear
  - (d) Yogi Beer

Have a go then turn to page 22 to check your answers.

# real ale “made in china”?



Rob Walters

The Chinese have not been beer drinkers for long, their favourite tippie is often called ‘white wine’ and is made from rice. It is generally very strong and tastes like the pure alcohol I secretly sampled as an experiment in the chemistry lab at my school many years ago. Beer was introduced by the Germans in the early years of the last century as part of the generous attempts by the westerners to educate this ancient eastern civilisation. It is now a popular drink, mostly bought as bottles and mostly consumed warm. It tends to be sweetish, fizzy and of indeterminate strength (they do not use ABV).

I lived in the country for a few months – teaching English in a middle school. Believe me teaching classes of 64 plus does generate a healthy thirst for beer. I had to rapidly learn the Mandarin for beer and for cold (the latter was very difficult). My first beer was I believe a Snow. It came in a full sized bottle and cost me the equivalent of 30p – in some places you were ripped off and the price could rise to as much as 70p. These incredibly low prices proved some compensation for the lack of quality, but I kept searching for a better beer. Hans was pretty dire and Harbin not much better. Xixia was a little more bitter. And so the search went on – there are many beers in China, but nothing like a good British bitter.

Of course, the thing to do is forget all about real ale when you leave these shores – but email makes that more difficult.

I could not resist opening the mails which told me about forthcoming beer festivals in the Oxford area – and secretly drooled over the list of ales that were going to be there. Homesickness was replaced by ‘alesickness’.

Then, one day in the ‘People’ Restaurant’ in the centre of our city of Yan’an I paid £1.50 for one of those ‘eat anything you like’ meals. The place was huge and the variety of food immense. I left my wife poring over the starters and went to get the beers – also included in the price. Shock and delight, there was a choice of beer, ‘Snow’ from the bottle or a mystery beer from the barrel!!

The barrels were made of a bright green plastic. They stood on end and the tap was of the sort that you usually get on a water butt. Later I found that there was a pressure relief valve at the top which could be opened to allow air into the

barrel to replace the beer. And what about the beer itself? Well it wasn’t like a good pint of the real stuff. I would say that it had a lagery taste – but it was certainly less gassy and much, much better all round than the bottled stuff. I had to try a large number of glasses to confirm this – all included in the £1.50 entrance fee!

After that I began to find other outlets supplying this barrelled beer. I even found one near my school, a scruffy little restaurant that I made my local – to the extent the owner would pour me a ‘pint’ as soon as I walked into the place. Naturally I was very interested in the beer – what was it, was it real ale, who made it, where did it come from? It was difficult to get answers through the language barrier but I ascertained that it was Tsingtao beer, probably brewed under licence in Xian (where the Terracotta Warriors live) and brought to my remote city





overnight by train, then delivered on demand in an unmarked white minivan. The locals called it "fresh beer" and it was cheaper than the bottled stuff. It seemed to be regarded as the beer of the working classes, just as our own real ale was in my living memory. It did have a tendency to go flat if the barrel was not used up quite quickly and could also get a vinegary tang in the same way. The barrels were not large, considerably smaller than a firkin, and I did not see in any cloudy beer or any attempt to allow it to settle after delivery.

From my observations (made over many nights in the local and elsewhere), I concluded that it was "bright beer" like the stuff I get in a pin for Christ-mas. I spent the rest of my stay

at the school searching for the stuff rather than drinking the fizzy bottled beer or canned stuff. My wife thought it was just like home where I refuse to drink in a bar with no real ale!

Travelling down the Yangtze I found more of this fresh beer, this time in smaller containers so that you bought the whole thing between a group of you, it was brought to your table in the restaurant. On the barrel it said Chang Shan Xian Pi and I liked it better than the Tsingtao beer.

In Shanghai I found a brewpub called Henry's. Here there were five different beers and rather fewer customers – even though the place was huge. I tried all five and didn't really like any of them. Sorry Henry.

I shall be going back to China, probably next year. There is more research to do!

#### The Old Anchor,

Abingdon, held its first festival early in November. Beers on offer were from the GK stable - IPA, Mild, Olde Trip, Abbot, Old Bob, plus Bateman XXXB, Holdens Bitter and Tom Woods Bomber County and all were in good condition. There were also real ciders on offer and Hoegarden on tap, but the surprise guest was Abbot Special Reserve at 6.4%.

Unfortunately the customers were not so reserved and it emptied very quickly:-)

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



**HOBGOBLIN**  
*Deliciously dark*

# inn and around oxford



The **Fox and Hounds**, on Abingdon Road, has suffered several manager changes recently and has been boarded up prior to a full refurbishment taking place. This has been confirmed by Marstons Inns and Taverns who now own the pub, having bought it a couple of years ago (they also own Que Pasa, Brewery Gate and the Seacourt Bridge).

The **Kings Head and Bell** in Abingdon has closed for structural repairs, as yet there is not a reopening date. Apparently the structural problem in the Kings Head & Bell involves the King Charles room, that's the function room above the entranceway, and as access was compromised the pub had to shut until repairs are undertaken. This listed pub is now owned by Tyneside-based Ladhar Group.

The **Marlborough House** in Grandpont has closed and is currently boarded up. The local word is that it will probably be converted to flats.

The **Vale Brewing Company** has received four awards at the Society of Independent Brewers Association (SIBA) Midlands Beer Competition. The competition had 158 entries. Vale collected awards for:

*Gravitas* – Gold: Premium Beers  
*Gravitas* – Silver: Overall Champion Beer  
*VPA* – Silver: Best Bitters  
*Black Swan Mild* – Bronze: Mild

Also, Buckinghamshire Ale has been chosen by Marks and Spencer as one of four beers in their bottle conditioned range.

The brewery, established in 1995, recently relocated from Haddenham to Brill to meet the increased demand.

The **Royal Standard** in Headington has had a refurbishment and the **Butchers Arms** is now under new management. Again!

Jane and Clive, who have been in charge at the **Ampleforth Arms** for a year or so, have turned things around there. It now has a more friendly atmosphere and with Adnams bitter, Spitfire and Bombadier on hand pump.

**Witney washout update:** The **Court Inn** is still closed as a result of the 'monsoon' damage earlier this year. However, work is progressing at it is hoped that the pub will re-open early next year. The establishment is managed by the ex-landlord of the Robin Hood, Witney, and some of his regulars get together for a few sessions of pool etc in the most hospitable section of the bar. **The Plough** is also still closed following more monsoon damage. However, a notice there states "Dried Out – Getting Plastered" so an imminent reopening of this good beer pub is expected.

**The Plough**, Kelmscott, Oxford City's most western and distant pub, is also closed until the New Year. However, some locals have to been known to make use of the smokers' tent

just to keep things going – it's a long way to the next hostelry!

**The Star**, Eynsham, is a different and lively beast. It is now serving a good quality reasonably priced food. There is a bar area, although not extensive, where the locals accumulate. The owner, Oliver Samson, previously had a café in Belgium and so there are some bottled Belgian beers available. There are two hand pumps which, on a recent visit, were Hook Norton Bitter and Speckled Hen, and will be replaced by other guest ales, the next being a series of Wickwar brews. A most hospitable place and the owner even fetched an extra cushioned bar stool for this reporter.

**The Horseshoe**, Bampton, has been considerably revamped by Greene King.

**The Masons**, Aston, near Bampton, is currently being refurbished by the 'local' landlord and landlady – he was born in the village and she moved there 30 years ago. The previous occupants moved out suddenly and the taps were left running, flooding the place. Refurbishment is underway and the lounge/quiet room has sofas and soft seating. Although only two handpumps are operating, the beer – Courage Best and Ringwood – is well kept, if a little cool (better cool than warm!). On a recent CAMRA survey trip it was found to be a lively place and deserves further visits.

# around the county



Alistair Pitman

One of our braches campaigning activities is surveying the rural pubs. We have about as many rural pubs as pubs within the Oxford ring road. Most of our active branch members are in Oxford so monitoring our village pubs is a difficult task. Our village pub survey crawls are a good way for us to have a good look at our village pubs. It's a vital campaign activity and a great way to get to know Oxfordshire, by visiting all the pubs.

A few days after the flood we set out for a survey crawl of five village pubs with Tony Golding at the helm.

Our first pub of the night was the **Masons Arms** at North Leigh, a tranquil locals' pub. It was a hot day and the first pint didn't last long. It was a pint of pedigree, in good condition. There were four or five regulars at the bar discussing racing, which is often shown in the pub.



Second was the **Woodman**, also at North Leigh. The pub serves two ales during the week and four at the weekend. That night's ales were Adnams and Brakspear. There were as many diners as drinkers inside but all drinkers in the popular beer garden. The beer garden is half patio and half a raised grassed area with Aunt Sally in

the grassed area. The landlord and landlady are John and Leanda. It was a warm sunny evening with a clear sky. Everyone was chatting eagerly. There was much talk of pubs, beer, drinking activities and general gossip.



Next was the **The Saddlers Arms** at New Yatt, managed by Oxford Hotels and Inns, who also manage the Eight Bells at Eaton and the Bells at East Haney. It was a little cooler when we arrived here and the small beer garden was empty. Inside everyone was busy with a bar billiards tournament.



The only real ale was Everards Sun Chaser. A very pale beer, slightly watery with only a subtle flavour, but very refreshing and my pint of the night. Most of us score all of our beers with the CAMRA scoring system. Every time we visit a pub the beer is scored from zero to five. CAMRA collect all of the

scores for the pubs. The scores for pubs are useful for us to monitor the pubs. I gave the Sun Chaser a four.

Then off to the **Boot Inn**. The Boot was very busy, but all diners. We were the only drinkers. Numerous pairs of boots from different sports decorate the walls, including Gary Lineker, Geoff Hurst and Stanley Mathews. I ate olives with my pint next to a fountain with cherubs on the patio area in front of the pub. After a few pints we were as happy the cherubs in the fountain.



Finally the **Talbot**, which was a pleasant surprise. We have been hearing a lot about the pub from Graham and Bev Baker who often visit. The pub was very lively despite being a remote pub. It was midweek closing time and the pub was packed. The beers were Kingsdown Ale, Everards Summer Ale and Arkells 3B. It's always satisfying when we survey a pub that has improved a lot and is thriving, which is after all the purpose of the survey.



# papers roundup

*courtesy of the Publican*

Punch Taverns has approached investors in Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) about plans to mount a £5bn merger that would create Britain's biggest pubs group. Bankers at Morgan Stanley, which is acting for Punch, have sounded out a handful of top M&B shareholders about the proposal, which includes a cash-and-paper offer that could value M&B at about 800p a share, well above Friday's 641p closing price. M&B investors are still considering the plan, which would create a group of 11,000 pubs, but a number are determined that the company pursues the strategy favoured by Robert Tchenguiz, the property entrepreneur. Tchenguiz, who owns about 20 per cent of the company, wants M&B to put its property assets into a £4.5 billion tax-efficient real-estate investment trust. – **Sunday Times**

The Takeover Panel is expected to put pressure on Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) and Punch Taverns to spell out details of their talks to form Britain's largest pub operator. Reports have claimed that advisers to the two companies had been locked in talks on Friday. M&B has been under pressure from investors to unlock the value of its property portfolio and a deal with Punch would have gone some way towards that. Last night a spokesman for M&B played down the speculation. "There are no ongoing merger talks and there has been no approach [from Punch]," he said. – **Sunday Telegraph**

The British pub, adored and envied all over the world, is disappearing before our very eyes and with it our national drink, beer, as the nation that invented jingoism succumbs to its preference for anything foreign. It says as much as our football players' performance on the pitch – or the number of foreigners in the Premier League – that the England team are sponsored by a Danish brewer. And how do we greet tourists from the Continent arriving at our magnificently refurbished St Pancras station? With a bar selling fizzy French wine at £8.95 a glass. British beer and the British pub are joined at the hip, intermingled like no other alcoholic combination. Stop reading this and get down to your local. Buy a pint. Talk to somebody, get a life and save a British institution. – **Sunday Times**

Greene King - never heard of them! - has bought North East pub company New Century Inns (NCI) for £32.6m. NCI consists of 49 tenanted and leased pubs, 48 of which are freehold. The pubs are located in Northumberland, County Durham, Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

Rooney Anand, Greene King's chief executive said: "The licensees at New Century Inns will benefit strongly from having access to a flexible range of agreements, attractive product range and supportive management style."

As Jim Royle would say, "flexible my arse!"

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# around the county



Tony Goulding

A further survey along the Thames in West Oxfordshire with a target of six pubs yielded a very enjoyable and interesting evening. Starting from **The Fox**, Stanton Harcourt, a former Morrells now Admiral Taverns house, this very much a locals' pub was serving good Hobgoblin and Flowers Original. The last mentioned being a rare beer these days, this spacious one bar old building has a large outdoor area.

At the other end of this village is the **Harcourt Hotel** a large two roomed lease from punch taverns with a big emphasis on food with themed nights good value. Of course the beer is of importance and here there is always a good pint. Brakspear Bitter, Adnams Bitter and 6X being on offer.

A drive through the lanes to Bablock Hythe, Northmoor, found us at the **Ferryman Inn**. This Greene King riverside pub serves a community of mobile homes for locals and holiday visitors. The small ferryboat used on the river crossing sits out of use on the river bank. The beer, Greene King IPA, was pleasant enough.

The surprise of the night was in the village of Northmoor. **The Red Lion** another Greene King, ex-Morland's house was a very friendly and comfortable locals pub selling good food. This old twin roomed pub served an excellent, for Greene King, pint of Ruddles Hedgerow and with Morland Original plus the never ending IPA is a must

visit. Another good find. The final two pubs in the sprawling village of Standlake were soon in sight.



**The Bell** another Greene King house is again a 100+ year old building serving Greene King Abbott and Morland original both in good order. New tenants are now running this former Morland house - we wish them well.

The last visit was to the GBG **Black Horse** which did not disappoint. As ever the good quality beers from Hook Norton were supported by Everards. This friendly multi-roomed old farmhouse also serves good value food from an enormous menu. With free peanuts, this pub is not to be missed.

A survey along the Berinsfield to Abingdon road compared very well with a previous trip a year earlier. Starting at the **Chequers** at Burcot, this food oriented 100+ year old pub had recently changed hands from the bankrupt London and Edinburgh pub company on lease to the recent licensee. Still a light airy and spacious old building, the Hooky Gold was very good but the Hooky Bitter was tired. Always worth a look.

Arriving at the Thames-side village of Clifton Hampden, the pretty old rambling **Plough** was serving a rare pint of Batemans XB bitter in very good condition. This high quality food and lodging house was very inviting on a pleasant evening.



Across the main road was the much improved **Barley Mow**, owned by chef and brewer. Again a big eating house, multi-roomed with lots of timber the beers were in better condition than previous visits. Titanic Triple Screw and Old Speckled hen were sampled and in good order.

At Culham station, the previously named Jolly Porter, then Railway Inn is now the **Culham Tandoori**. Although now an Indian restaurant, the bar is retained and was serving a very good Loddon Hullabaloo with the bland John Smith's in bottom of barrel condition. Again, worth a visit for the guest beer.

Last port of call, the **Waggon and Horses**, a new Wood Inns pub, ex-Morrells was its normal self. Lots of good food - the pub is run by a Thai family - and good beer, Caledonian XB among others.



# oxford pubs no more



Tony Goulding

Our local branch is always waiting to hear from you about pubs that may not be with us for much longer. Unfortunately this happens much more often than we would choose!

Some of our recent losses are:

The Horse and Jockey (Morrells), Woodstock Road, is now student accommodation.

The Carpenters (Morrells), Jericho, is now Church College accommodation.

The Globe (Morrells), Jericho, is now being converted into flats. Jericho cannot afford to loose good pubs with the recent increase in popularity and development. But the area could loose greedy and selfish property developers. Most people would never miss them. CAMRA could award bounty to anyone running them out of town!

The Fair Rosamund (Halls), at Elms Rise Botley, a former estate pub built in the sixties, was demolished and replaced by flats.

The Carpenters Arms (Morrells), Botley, was sold to Macdonnells – can't even spell it! - by another parasite called Cannon of Morrells closing fame. Justice prevails as it's now closed awaiting flood repairs

The Wharf House in St Ebbes - to be fair Tony had run the pub well and wanting to retire had sold it with good intentions. Whether it will open who knows - it looks pretty

grim.

The Grandpont Arms, Edith Road off Abingdon Road, is now a private house. For many years this pub never sold real ale.

The Seven Stars (Morrells), Lake St off the Abingdon Road, was a lovely old locals local, but is now a private house.

The Crown, Lake St, which had no real ale for a long time prior to closure, is now a private house.

The Queens Arms (Courage), Westbury Crescent, was subject over the years to landlord changes and unruly lager drinkers not behaving themselves, was demolished and replaced by flats.

The Bell (Halls), Old High St Headington, was demolished and replaced by a house.

The Plasterers (Morrells), beyond St Clements was another casualty of that man Cannon.

The Coach and Horses, again (Morrells), closed for over five years. This was a proper Irish pub. Most of the customers now frequent the Port Mahon and the Half Moon - proper Irish pubs compared with O'Neill's.

The Red Lion (Halls), Woodstock Road, closed ten years ago and is now of Lemon Tree fame etc.

The Apollo, St Aldates,

opposite the police station later became the St Aldates Tavern, then one of only six pubs owned by Morlands in the city.

The Ox, formerly the King of Prussia, Rose Hill - what a challenge for anyone to run this busy but rowdy former Morrells House - are there any more (Morrells) pubs left to close? – It burnt down and is soon to be a Co-op supermarket.

The Friar Bacon (Morrells), on the bypass at Cutteslowe, was also demolished and is now a block of flats.

The Cherwell (Halls), was demolished in the 1980s and rebuilt. It was again demolished in 2000 and replaced by flats This pub was also situated in the estate at the top of the Banbury Road.

The White Hart, Old Marston - yes, its true, another Morrells pub now converted to a private house The call to fame for this pub - the beer festivals at the town hall were thrashed out here one fine evening and the rest is history.

The Fox (Morrells), Barton, off the Green Road roundabout, a busy and sometimes intimidating pub, was also demolished and replaced by flats.

The Prince's Castle (Halls) on Barton Village Road closed in the 1980s and was converted to a private house.

*continued over*

The Shotover Arms (Halls), at the Green Road roundabout, always served good Burton ale, but when Macdonnells comes along with a wedge of money, any successful pub can fall. Sometimes bad things become good and it appears that we may be getting the Shotover back.



The Friar, Marston Road, is closed and subject to planning for conversion or demolition.

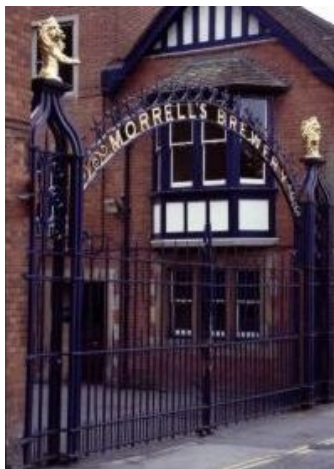
There are more out there. If you know of any pubs threatened call your local branch or come to a meeting or pub survey trip remember MORRELLS with pride!

After the Hall's brewery closed, Morrell's was left as the only brewery in Oxford. Their buildings date from the 1890s and the architect, aptly (not!), was called H. G. Drinkwater. The St Thomas' Street site was closed at the end of the 1990s.



The old Halls Brewery premises in Pembroke Street belonged to the City of Oxford who agreed a change of use and set up a lease arrangement with Modern Art Oxford, which is now based there.

In 1743 Richard Tawney founded what was to become, in 1800, the Morrell's brewery. However, the first brew house on the site was created back in 1570.



## "did you know...?"

1. C: A fermentation system in Burton on Trent. Fermenting wort (beer) rises through swan necks into long troughs where it settles
2. B: An artist
3. Whisky is only produced in Scotland whereas whiskey (with an 'e') is produced in Ireland or elsewhere
4. B: A cocktail - a mixture of beer with a shot of tomato juice
5. C: Gruesome as it sounds, it's the molten lead
- 6: ESB = Extra Special Bitter
7. C: Beer exposed to bright light can result in the production of a 'skunky' aroma from the breakdown of hops. Hence, ale in dark bottles is less likely to succumb.
8. D: All the others are real ales from the Beartown Brewery  
[www.beartownbrewery.co.uk](http://www.beartownbrewery.co.uk)

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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](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/pubs.php)

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