



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

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# the Oxford Drinker

## Witney Pubs Review

Witney, it is said, was established on the 'three Bs' – Blankets, Bread and Beer. Sadly the blankets have gone and the last bakery closed six months ago. However, beer is still a regional gem.

### WITNEY - BLANKETS

The original number of breweries declined rapidly over 200 years until the mainstay of Clinch's brewery evolved into the Glenny and eventually the current 1000 barrel a week Wychwood brewery, now owned by Marstons.



The only other remaining brewery – Burford – producing five barrels a week, is in the north-west of town.

In the last 40 years, Witney has lost only three pubs – a unique situation! This is the first of a series of articles in the Oxford Drinker to review the Witney scene and put the overlooked concentration of pubs in the town 'on the map'.

A map of the town is included on page 3 and the numbers in brackets in the article refer to the position of the pub as marked on the map.

On the main Hailey Road, the Robin Hood (1) was built in the 1960s for Morrells, now owned by Green

King. It is a basic estate boozier serving Greene King IPA in what is the type of pub becoming increasingly scarce.

Continuing along to the West End, the House of Windsor free house (2) was originally the King of Prussia but the politics of the First World War dictated a name change 25 years ago. The pub was the first in Witney to serve Timothy Taylor Landlord, the then top beer of Britain. This old odd-shaped inn with a pleasant garden has been serving good quality beer for many years – 19 out of 30 CAMRA Good Beer Guide entries! However it is now under the constant shadow of closure and redevelopment as housing.

*Continued on page 3*

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

# "I'M ONLY HERE FOR THE BEER."



## THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ASCOT RACECOURSE BEER FESTIVAL

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- Hot and cold food available all day.
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The World's Most Famous Racecourse

'Use it or lose it' as we say. They serve four real ales – St Austell Tinnars Ale and three guests.

A few yards further along West End is another low beamed free house, the Elm Tree (3). This tardis-like local, with a small frontage that hides a long spacious interior leading to a small garden, can get very busy. The quiet area lounge in signposted 'Lonely Street'. Good quality Wadworths 6X, Brakspear Bitter, Wychwood Hobgoblin and a regular surprise from Wychwood are served.

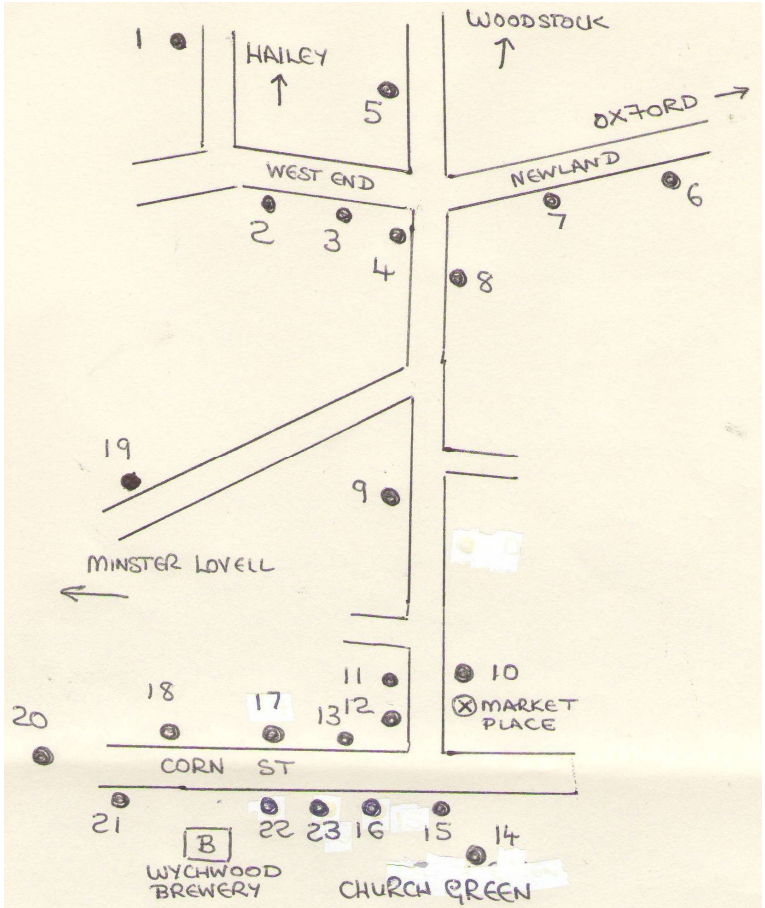
On the corner of the busy junction of the Woodstock and Oxford Roads it the Court Inn (4), another free house. This old coaching inn, recently refurbished before then being flooded out, once served the best John Smith's bitter in Witney. Changes of identity over the years have turned the Court in to a hotel and eatery. Nevertheless, Donnington beers, very rare in Witney, are stocked in good condition.

Moving up the hill to Wood Green, the Three Pigeons (5), opposite the church and Green, is a former 18<sup>th</sup> century Courage and Clinch's house. This is a true 'local' with many age groups enjoying the sprawling multi-bar style. Two beers are served including regular Deuchars IPA – not to be missed.

The first of two pubs on Newland, the old A40 Oxford Road, is the Griffin



(6). Another 18<sup>th</sup> Century former Sarnes of Burford house, it is now owned by Wadworths – their only pub in Witney. Very much a basic



local, despite being on a busy road, the Griffin serves good Wadworths IPA and 6X.



100 yards further along is the Carpenters (7), a former Clinches then Morrells now Greene King pub. Originally two cottages, this 1800s spacious local, with a sprawling garden, stocks the standard Greene King IPA with GK guests.

From Newland, around the corner from the Court, is the Plough (8), one of Witney's oldest buildings.



Dating from around 1840, the Clinches Brewery owned the pub and it passed to Courage in the

1960s. Now owned by Admiral Taverns, Witney's only riverside pub has gone from strength to strength. Another pub flooded and closed for eight months, it now serves four ever-changing good quality beers.

For further information on the history of Witney's pubs and breweries, see Derek Honey's book: *Witney Inns: Pubs and Brewers Past and Present* (see page 7).

Part two of the Witney pub review in the next edition of the *Oxford Drinker*.

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**Beer Boxes** – From only £1.38 a pint. Polypins (35 pints) or Minipins (17 pints) of real ale ready to drink at home from only £26.

Please call in advance to order 01844 239237.

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Vale Best Bitter 3.7% ABV - Light copper hoppy bitter  
 Vale Pale Ale 4.2% ABV - Dry hoppy golden ale  
 Vale Special 4.5% ABV - Bronze Premium Bitter  
 Gravitas 4.8% - Pale Premium hoppy bitter  
 Black Swan Mild 3.9% - Dark smooth rich mild  
 Black Beauty Porter 4.3% - Full bodied dark porter  
 Wychert 3.9% - Rich malty auburn bitter  
 Edgars Golden Ale 4.3% - English golden best bitter  
 Grumpling Old Ale 4.6% - Ruby brown premium ale

A worldwide selection of wines are available, along with bottled Thatchers cider.



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Tramway Business Park, Ludgershall Road, Brill, HP18 9TY

Tel: 01844 239237 e-mail: [info@valebrewery.co.uk](mailto:info@valebrewery.co.uk)

Opening hours. Mon to Fri 9.30am to 5pm, Sat 9.30am to 11.30am.

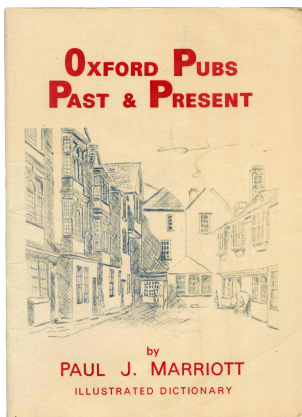
# Breweriana - part 2



Richard Queralt

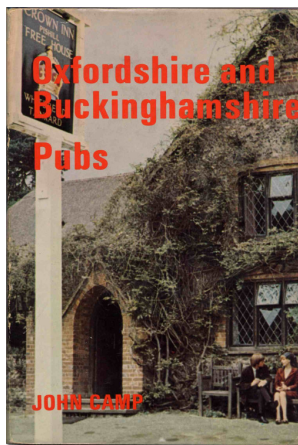
The word breweriana is a 'made up' term for all the relics, objects and equipment connected to brewing and distilling. Anything, however worthless it might appear, seems to be of interest to the collector of breweriana. Part 1 looked at beer mats, beer bottle labels, playing cards and pub signs.

Thousands upon thousands of books on pubs and beer, breweries and distilleries and anything even remotely connected have been published. The older ones can be good sources of reference for anyone interested in pub and brewery history. Here are a few local examples.



The 50 page booklet above, long out of print, was published in 1978 and covers pubs within the Oxford ring-road as far back as 1900. Some entries are very brief due to the limited information still available. For instance, the Leopold Arms in Cornmarket Street, closed around 1907, has an entry of just a dozen or so words. The same goes for several St

Ebbes pubs, such as the Rising Sun in Church Street and the Ancient Briton, Blackfriars Road, which disappeared, along with the streets they stood in, during 1960s redevelopment of the area. On the other hand, the Mitre in Oxford's High Street, has a potted history covering almost a whole page, including dates, events, notable customers and characters as well as architectural details. A more up-to-date book, 'An Encyclopædia of Oxford Pubs, Inns and Taverns', written by local author Derek Honey in 1998, is still available and covers the subject in more depth and detail. As it doesn't limit itself to 1900, there are lots more entries compared to the previous book.



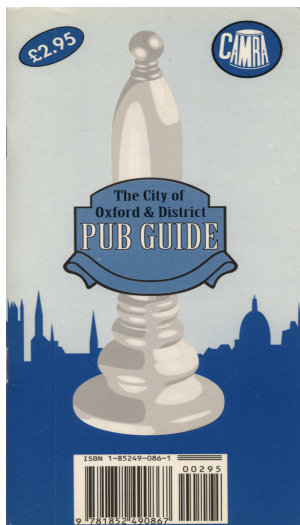
Although this one covers the whole of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, only selected pubs get a mention. Published in 1965, every town and lots of villages are included. Each entry has a short history and a description

of the pub's interior décor and layout. Also included are details on accommodation, food and drinks available. As it was written in the 1960s, several mentions of 'Watney's Red Barrel' and 'Worthington E' are to be found on almost every page...

Some entries include the words NO DRAUGHT BEER. By this the author meant there was no real ale on sale, only keg. He makes this prediction during an entry for one of these pubs: 'The beer is Flowers, and it is all from the keg - there is no draught. For the older bitter-drinker, set in his ways and notoriously critical of his beer, this might, perhaps be considered a drawback. But this is the tendency today, and the generation now beginning to develop a palate for beer will one day describe to their grandchildren those far-off days when the beer came in wooden casks, and needed such care before it was ready to sell'. This was probably general feeling at the time - that cask beer would disappear completely to be replaced by keg. What the author didn't see in his crystal ball was CAMRA waiting round the corner.

In its day this would have been a very useful book for the real ale drinker, as CAMRA's Good Beer Guide had yet to be invented. Forty years on it provides an interesting snapshot of our pubs and beer in the 1960s with the keg revolution well under way.

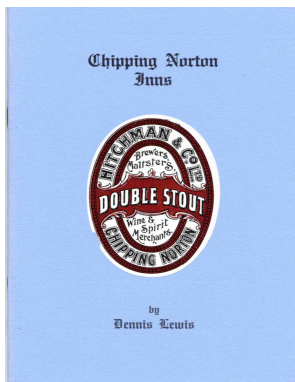
Most local branches of CAMRA publish their own pub guides these days. They usually serve to point the drinker in the direction of pubs serving good real ale rather than provide the reader with historical and architectural details.



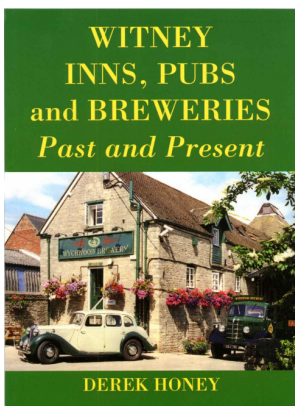
Oxford CAMRA has compiled several of these over the years. The 1995 edition, above, was the first since 1982. Besides the area within and just outside the ring-road, it also covered Kidlington, Sandford-on-Thames and Wytham, and included articles on real ale and CAMRA, alongside a list of breweries with pubs in the area. In the 1970s, three editions of 'Real Ale in Oxfordshire' were compiled to cover the whole county.

The most recent Oxford City pub guide came out in 2005 and is available via the website:  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

Besides Oxford, many of the county's other towns have had pub guides written for them. The 60-page Chipping Norton guide below has a genuine beer bottle label stuck to its front cover commemorating the town's brewery, Hitchman & Co. The booklet includes a history of the company, which closed in 1968. Dated 1986, a revised version was published in 2004.



More recently, 'Witney Inns, Pubs and Breweries' was published in 2007 as a follow-up to 1995's 'Historic Witney Inns' by the same author.



There are also guides to several other Oxfordshire towns, such as Abingdon,

Banbury, Burford and Thame. Most are out of print but can sometimes be found second-hand. A good place to start is: [www.beerinnprint.co.uk](http://www.beerinnprint.co.uk)

Nationally, CAMRA has published dozens of books during the past 30 years covering various aspects of the pub and brewing trade. Besides its flagship Good Beer Guide, now in its 35<sup>th</sup> edition, there's a Good Cider Guide and beer and bar guides to Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic and West Coast USA. More recent is the True Heritage series documenting Britain's best preserved pubs. Guides to East Anglia, Liverpool London and Scotland are already available, with more to follow.

In Part 3: bottles and more bottles.

Want to know all the latest news and events?

Share information about what's happening in your area?

Sign up to our e-mailing list.

Details on the website at:

[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists.php](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists.php)

# beer festival diary



Tues 5 - Sat 9 August

## 31<sup>st</sup> Great British Beer Festival

Earl's Court, London  
450 real ales plus ciders,  
perries & international beers  
[www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)

Sat 9 - Sun 10 August

## Bicester Round Table Beer & Jazz Festival

Garth Park, Launton Road,  
Bicester  
[www.bicesterroundtable.org.uk](http://www.bicesterroundtable.org.uk)

Thurs 14 - Sat 16 August

## 9<sup>th</sup> Worcester Beer, Cider & Perry Festival

Worcester Racecourse  
200+ beers, 100 ciders &  
perries  
[www.worcesterbeerfest.org.uk](http://www.worcesterbeerfest.org.uk)

Fri 22 - Mon 25 August

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Chester Arms Beer Festival

Chester Street, Oxford  
20 beers & ciders  
01865 243203  
[www.chesterarmsoxford.co.uk](http://www.chesterarmsoxford.co.uk)

Fri 22 - Mon 25 August

## Woodman Inn Beer Festival

New Yat Road, North Leigh, Nr  
Whitney 01993 881790

Sat 23 - Mon 25 August

## 5<sup>th</sup> Brill Beer Festival

Brill Sports & Social Club,  
Church Street, Brill, Nr Thame  
[www.brillbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.brillbeerfestival.co.uk)

Fri 29 - Sat 30 August

## Harbury Beer Festival

Village Hall, Harbury, nr  
Leamington Spa  
55 beers plus 12 ciders &  
perries  
[www.camrahaw.org.uk](http://www.camrahaw.org.uk)

Fri 5 - Sun 7 September

## 7<sup>th</sup> Headington Beer Festival.

Masons Arms, Headington

Quarry, Oxford

30 beers plus ciders & perries

01865 764579

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

Thurs 11 - Sat 13 September

## Birmingham Beer Festival

Aston University Student  
Union, Gosta Green,  
Birmingham  
85 beers plus ciders, perries &  
foreign beers  
[www.birminghamcamra.org.uk](http://www.birminghamcamra.org.uk)

Tues 16 - Sat 20 September

## Far From the Madding Crowd Autumn Beer Festival

Friars Entry, Oxford  
01865 240900  
[www.maddingcrowd.co.uk](http://www.maddingcrowd.co.uk)

Fri 26 - Sat 27 September

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival

130+ real ales, ciders & perries  
see page 2

Fri 26 - Sun 28 September

## 1st North Cotswold CAMRA Beer Festival

Moreton-in-Marsh Cricket Club,  
Batsford Road, Moreton-in-  
Marsh  
40 beers plus ciders & perries  
[www.northcotswoldcamra.org.uk/](http://www.northcotswoldcamra.org.uk/)  
Festival1.htm

Fri 3 - Sat 4 October

## Solihull Beer Festival

Solihull Royal British Legion,  
Union Road, Solihull  
35 beers plus ciders  
[www.solihullcamra.org.uk](http://www.solihullcamra.org.uk)

Thursday 16 - Saturday 18

October

## 11<sup>th</sup> Oxford CAMRA Beer Festival.

Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates,  
Oxford  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

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01296 484 551

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[camra.org.uk](http://camra.org.uk)

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

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



# White Horse Brewery



Mike Lord

## The Oxford Brewers' Group's Visit to the White Horse Brewery

The White Horse Brewery in Stanford-in-the-Vale is arguably one of the finest microbreweries in Oxfordshire. A 3½-man operation (actually 3 men and half a woman), it punches above its weight in terms of both the quantity of ale it seems to be selling and, most importantly of all, the quality of its beers.

The Oxford Brewers Group is an informal and expanding group of craft brewers, most of whose members brew ale on an amateur basis, but at least one of whom has gone professional. Most of the group are also CAMRA members, so we thought a report of our activities might merit a mention in the Oxford Drinker.

Bring together the White Horse Brewery and the Oxford Brewers Group and what do you get? A very nice afternoon, thank you very much. Ten of us turned up for the tour and were met at the entrance by head brewer Steve McCormack

(known to everyone as Mac) whose first question was, "Beer everyone?" It wasn't that far off noon, so it seemed churlish to refuse. The Oxfordshire Bitter went down a treat and we were soon in the malt store, glasses in hands, sniffing and chewing bits of barley of various colours, tastes and aromas in that wistful way that craft brewers have that says, "I'd really like to do this for a living".

Downstairs again, via the tap room for a quick top-up, to the brewery itself. The equipment was bought almost-new by Andy the Managing Director at a brewery equipment cash-and-carry shop in Belgium. It had only been used four times (obviously someone's unwanted Christmas present), but is now put to use five times a week by Mac to excellent effect.

Mac has an infectious enthusiasm for his beer-making craft and was very happy to answer all sorts of questions from his amateur counterparts. Originally graduating in chemistry, he attended one of

the few post-graduate courses in the UK on brewing science at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and that knowledge has clearly translated itself into very good beer indeed.

The rest of the tour involved going through ever colder and colder rooms and listening to the sound of jingling bells. Oh yes, I forgot to mention, the next tour party was a group of morris dancers from Brighton and, as they quaffed the complimentary drinks in the tap room, they were moved to shake their booties. A lot.

Actually, they turned out to be a very friendly bunch and the afternoon ended with an impromptu performance outside the brewery in the early June sunshine. What could be finer? The sight and sound of traditional English folk dancers, accompanied by a pint of good ale. Pity it was on an industrial estate. But after several free pints of Wayland Smithy and Saracen did we really care?

[www.whitehorsebrewery.com](http://www.whitehorsebrewery.com)  
[www.oxfordbrewers.com](http://www.oxfordbrewers.com)

# Charlbury Beer Festival

Tony Perry

The branch took a trip out to Charlbury on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July, to visit the beer festival. This was the eleventh beer festival to be held in Charlbury, and the first to be held at the new venue of the cricket club. The festival was held in the field next to the club, and was just a short walk from the station. The main bar was set up in a marquee, with other marquees dotted around the

site, one for the bands, and others for covered drinking areas. These came in handy during the day as the weather proved variable. When the sun came out, it was a very pleasant day, but when the rain came in, everyone made a dash for the marquees.

The festival offered 36 beers, ranging in strength from the 3.7% ABV of Arundel Sussex

Mild and Inveralmond Inkie Pinkie to the 6.0% ABV of Ballards Wassail. Favourites noted during the day by branch members were Yorkshireman from Elland in Leeds, Wild Hare from Bath Ales, Whapweasel from Hexamshire, and Otter Head from Otter Brewery in Honiton.

Also available were lagers from the Cotswold Brewing

Company, cider and perry, Pimms plus soft drinks. Interestingly, the bar was set up to take washers as payment for the beer, the washers being purchased as tokens at the entrance. Inevitably, this caused some general hilarity, as branch members discussed the possibility of popping up to the local hardware store to get cheaper supplies. Not that anyone bothered, of course!

Food came in the form of rather fine burgers and chips, and the bands played on through the day despite inclement weather.

The new venue proved to be a very popular choice, with much more space available to circulate and chat. Indeed, the fact there was a cricket match going on during the afternoon only added to the atmosphere. A pleasant time was spent with a

beer watching some particularly fine batting.

The festival runs as an independent charity, formed to allow money to be given to local good causes. Beneficiaries have included the local primary school, youth theatres and the cricket club itself. Once again, the festival was a great success, and we wish the organisers all the best for next year.



# 6X<sup>®</sup> equality



Every drop of 6X is Handmade in Devizes and brewed especially to suit both half and pint glasses at a pub near you.

# what's on



Neil Hoggarth

*Meetings and events are relaxed and friendly. Members and non-members are welcome at all events.*

## **Tuesday 12 August Rural Pub Surveying Trip**

Meet at the Lamb and Flag, St Giles. Contact the Social Secretary to book a place: Neil Hoggarth, 01865 794438, [social@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:social@oxfordcamra.org.uk).

## **Friday 15 August Branch Social**

Trip to Worcester Beer Festival, Worcester Race Course. Meet at Oxford Station in good time for 9.55 train.

## **Saturday 16 August, 1pm Regional Meeting**

The Conservative Club, Maidenhead.

## **Friday 22 August, 6pm Branch Social** Chester Arms Beer Festival

## **Friday 29 August, 6pm Survey Pub Crawl** Boat Inn, Canal Road, Thrupp Crawl of Thrupp and Kidlington

## **Wednesday 3 September 7.30pm Branch Meeting** Cape of Good Hope, The Plain, Oxford.

## **Friday 5 September, 6pm Branch Social** Headington Beer Festival, Mason's Arms, HQuarry.

## **Saturday 6 September Noon - 4pm Regional Aunt Sally Match** at the Headington Beer Festival, Mason's Arms, 2 Quarry School Place, Headington Quarry.

## **Tuesday 16 September 7.30pm Rural Pub Surveying Trip** Meet at the Lamb and Flag, St Giles. Contact the Social Secretary to book a place. Neil Hoggarth, 01865 794438, [social@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:social@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

## **Friday 26 September Daytime Branch Social** Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival

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# My favourite public house



*My favourite public house, [The White Hart] is only two minutes from [where I live], but it is on a side-street, and drunks and rowdies never seem to find their way there, even on Saturday nights.*

*If you are asked why you favour a particular public house, it would seem natural to put the beer first, but the thing that most appeals to me about [The White Hart] is what people call its "atmosphere".*

The two paragraphs above are only slightly adapted from George Orwell's famous 1946 essay on his fictional perfect pub, The Moon Under Water. While The MUW never existed (the name was picked up many years later for several Wetherspoon's), the White Hart has been a genuine near-perfect\* local for more than five years under the superb management of Linda Vinal and Dickie Underwood. It is fair to say that they transformed it from the off, bringing their experience and skills from the Mermaid in St Albans, when they were installed as the first tenants under

Everards' ownership of this historic Old Headington pub. At the time of the relaxation of the licensing laws, there were some particularly wild rumours that it was Dickie's intention to introduce karaoke(!). Those who knew better realized that quiet music, conversation, cribbage and Linda's home-cooked food would remain the orders of the day. The real ales were always in superb condition and fortunately, for a non-Everards fan like me, there were always one or two regularly-changing guests. Again as with Orwell and his fantasy pub, the "great surprise" of the White Hart is its garden. Within the lovely stone-walled space with its magnificent yew tree, Lin and Dickie have produced what must be the loveliest pub garden in Oxford.



*Dickie and Lin play dress-up at New Year in preparation for the move*

It is therefore sad for us that Lin and Dickie are leaving the White Hart to enjoy a well-deserved retirement in Spain. They will both be sorely missed. Lin will be missed for her pleasant, welcoming manner and concerned ear for the regulars. Dickie will be missed for the complete lack of these qualities, his unshakable belief in his cribbage genius, and his "sartorial elegance". We very much hope that the new tenants will carry on providing great hospitality in this "village local within Oxford".

\* there was at times, in my personal opinion, just a tad too much Rod and Jamie playing in the background for absolute perfection...

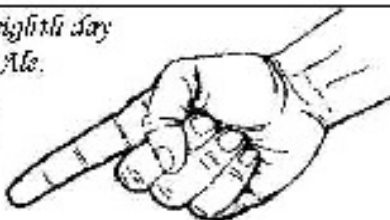
"Big" Nick





## The Old Bookbinders Ale House

*And on the eighth day  
God created Ale,  
and He saw  
that it was  
good.*



*And it is available in abundance at  
The Old Bookbinders Ale House  
Oxford Beer Festival 2008  
October 23rd - 26th*



Corner of Victor & Canal Street, Jericho, Oxford OX2 6BT Tel. 01865 553549  
<http://www.oldbookbinders.co.uk>



## The Masons Arms

2 Quarry School Place Headington Oxford  
01865 764579

*Keeping it Real*



Hook Norton Old Hooky 4.6%  
Breakspeare Oxfordshire Gold 4%  
West Berkshire Good Old Boy 4%  
Our Very Own  
OLD BOG Ales  
Plus ever changing Guest Ales

Oxford CAMRA pub of the Year 2004 & 2005



### NEW IN 2008

Real CIDER on the Hand Pump  
Guest Bottled Beers  
Cider Menu

The 7th Headington Beer Festival  
30 Real Ales and Cider Bar

*Check our web page for a list of all the beers*

**5th, 6th & 7th September**

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

# Black country trip

Matt Bullock

## A tale of Waggons and Horses

On the last day of May we made our annual pilgrimage to one of the finest areas for drinking in the country, the Black Country. Our transport this year was a rickety minibus but, in the capable hands of our driver Dave, we were able to sample a few of the pubs that are off the beaten track and too difficult to reach by our usual method of transport, the public variety.



We began at the **Chindit** in Wolverhampton, on a main road to the west of the city. It's a Victorian building converted into a pub after the war, and named in honour of the men of the South Staffordshire Regiment who fought in the Chindit campaign in Burma. The interior is pure 1950s, apart from a big flat screen TV, and we surprised the landlord somewhat by piling through the door just one minute after he had opened it, though the welcome was very warm. It's an Enterprise pub, and the prices reflected this (the landlord even apologised), but his choice of beer was excellent, and we enjoyed Enville Ale, Wye Valley Hereford Pale Ale and Hop Back Summer Lightning whilst

monies were gathered to pay for the bus while we were all sober.



From here we drove the short distance to an old favourite, the **Beacon** at Sedgley. We've been here many times, but it's always excellent, so nobody objected to an hour or so spent in its wonderful Victorian surroundings. Not surprisingly, most of the group went for the Dark Ruby Mild (6%) brewed on the premises and described by one of our number as "like silk", though other Sarah Hughes beers were available and the pub also sells a range of guest beers.



You can have too much of a good thing, and too much Dark Ruby Mild can be dangerous, as we have demonstrated in the past. So we moved on, after a stop for fish and chips, to the first **Waggon & Horses** of the day, at Tipton. We've been here in the past too, but returned this year to sample the Toll End beers brewed behind the pub. Cole Ole

(4.7%), Cop Shop (4.7%) and William Perry (4.3%) were the local brews, and beers from Banks's, Hobson's, Olde Swan and Ruddles completed the range.



Naturally we steered towards the house beers, and were rewarded with a quick two-minute look at the brewery before the clock ticked round to a quarter to the hour and it was time to depart again.



The **Wheatsheaf** in West Bromwich High Street is a fine Victorian Holden's pub. Sadly it sits within the 1970s wasteland that is West Bromwich High Street, but its surroundings should not put you off. The front bar is accessed straight off the street, and is the haunt of locals who engage in banter and gossip between horse races on the TV. The culture shock was a little too much for



some, and they retired to the rear lounge, but the front bar was friendly and lively, and those who chose to stay there enjoyed the company, as well as the Holden's beers. To top it off, the guest beer, Leeds Midnight Bell (4.8%) was the cheapest beer of the day at £1.50 a pint. Being a season ticket holder of the local football team, I was made most welcome, and one of the local even went down the street to buy us a couple of copies of the local newspaper, which featured an article about the pub, to read on the bus. Not everyone's cup of tea this one, but a real pub if ever I saw one.



Our **Waggon and Horses** crawl recommenced with a visit to the National Inventory-listed pub in Oldbury. Again the welcome was warm, and a beer range of Oakham JHB, Enville White, Nethergate Greedy Pike and Idle's Idle Chef was enough to keep us occupied for a while. The Edwardian tiled interior was exquisite, and the pub boasts some fine etched glass and a copper ceiling, all dating from the turn of the twentieth century.

We seemed to spend a lot of time admiring pub ceilings (and

not because we were on the floor by this stage), and the enamel one at the Olde Swan at Netherton was next on our list. Olde Swan beers gave yet more variety to our drinking day, and the pork pies were once again popular. John was even wearing his "who ate all the pies" t-shirt to celebrate the occasion, but he had the good grace to leave a few for the rest of us to enjoy as well, and his personal consumption was well down on last year!

You can't visit the Black Country without a good dose of Batham's, and our choice this year was a new one for all of us, the **Fox & Grapes** at Pensnett. To be fair, I think we were all agreed that it was the least memorable of the day. The two beers were good - Batham's would not stand for anything less in one of their tied houses - but the pub was a bland modernised interior of a fairly uninspiring building. There were some nice features, and I can't fault the welcome, but many of us took refuge in the garden and whiled away half an hour supping in the sun.



The **Hawne Tavern** in Halesowen was our penultimate destination. By now the day was becoming rather hazy, and a long and tortuous game of pool meant I forgot to note the range of guest beers, but for a back street pub the Hawne was very busy and lively.

We cut short our visit slightly, not because of the quality of the pool playing, but to complete the trio of Waggon and Horses pubs with a visit to our old favourite closer to the centre of town.

The pub is a permanent beer festival, with 16 beers always on sale, and this year was no exception. Beers from Berrow, Higsons, Purity, Cannon Royall, Jarrow, Salamander, Windsor Castle, Wold Top, Red Lion, Oakham, and Ossett were supplemented by Nottingham 'Don's Pale Ale',

1	PURITY PALE ALE	4.00	12.50
2	WINDSOR CASTLE (T.P.A.)	4.00	12.50
3	HIGSONS DRAUGHT	4.00	12.50
4	OSSETT CANNON ROYAL	4.00	12.50
5	CANNON ROYAL	4.00	12.50
6	WINDSOR CASTLE	4.00	12.50
7	WINDSOR CASTLE	4.00	12.50
8	BATHAM'S	4.00	12.50
9	SALAMANDER	4.00	12.50
10	WINDSOR CASTLE	4.00	12.50
11	OSSETT CANNON ROYAL	4.00	12.50
12	OAKHAM	4.00	12.50
13	WINDSOR CASTLE	4.00	12.50
14	WINDSOR CASTLE	4.00	12.50
WESTONS COUNTRY PERRY		4.50	13.00



brewed in memory of landlord Don Dykes, who had sadly passed away a few weeks previously following a stroke. Everyone at the pub

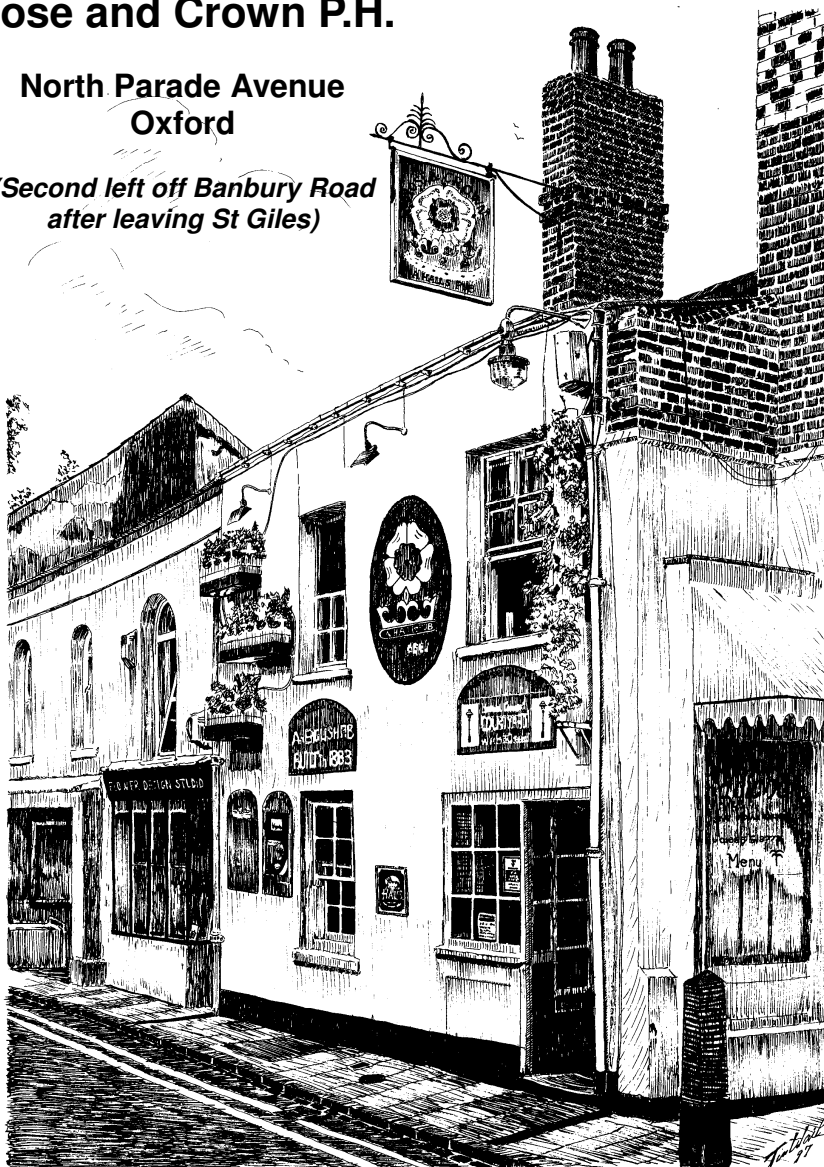
obviously misses Don, and the pub will never be the same without him, but his passion for beer has been reflected for years in the range and quality of the beer served here, and this has been carried on since his passing. We spent a while here, chatting with the friendly regulars, and enjoying the beers, eventually reluctantly making our way to the bus for the journey home.



# Rose and Crown P.H.

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# inn and around oxford



**The Red Lion** in Old Marston has been run by Keith and Kim Abrey, along with their son, Dan, and daughter, Rebecca, since April this year. It's a traditional family village pub and they started off just serving Sunday lunch but, due to a growing reputation for good value locally sourced food, they have now started to serve lunch time and evening meals on Friday and Saturday with a varied menu all under a tenner. Not to miss is the landlady's treacle sponge and custard! There is a large seating area at the back of the pub with a small children's play area and an Aunt Sally lane. They have men's and ladies' darts teams and SkyTV showing live football etc. It's also growing in reputation for its live music at the weekends. Cask ales include Abbot Ale, Morlands Original and guest which, on visiting, was Everards Tiger. All are 'tried and tested' by the management – a job the landlord says is his only. Private functions can be catered for. If you who haven't visited the pub since the hand over, give it another try!



Stuart and Angie Bull at **The Cricketer's Arms**, Littleworth, Wheatley have extended their

"SixSixes" ale portfolio to include two more Oxfordshire breweries: Loddon of Dunsden Green and Appleford Brewery of Appleford-on-Thames.



"We have received some fantastic feedback about the portfolio," said the couple, "Our customers are really getting behind the idea of being able to sample a good range of local, quality beers." They are already planning a beer festival for 2009, with the "SixSixes" concept being central to the festival and all beers being 4.2% or below to show-off the extensive range of lower ABV local ale that is available.

Things are on the up at the **Butcher's Arms** in Headington. Two enthusiastic guys have taken over as managers and a good range of Fuller's beers is served again. Watch this space for more details.

The winning name for the new Wetherspoons pub in Oxford city centre was **Four Candles**. It opened on Monday 4th

August to an enthusiastic crowd and it will be reviewed in the next issue.

It was feared that the **Bricklayers Arms** in Old Marston was destined for redevelopment but thankfully new managers are in place and closure is not likely in the foreseeable future.



Karen Bradley is the new landlady in the **Plough**, Abingdon, and is now serving Ale Fresco & Old Trip alongside IPA. It's a long time since this pub has served bitter on draught and both beers were in excellent condition at the time of my visit.

Refurbishment of **The Grapes** in Abingdon appears to be complete but its doors remain firmly locked!!

**The Spread Eagle** appears to be going from strength to strength with four ales on tap, one of them being Titanic's White Star – an exceptional beer.

The old chapel by the war memorial, once courted as possible Wetherspoons venue until some prominent townsfolk put the mockers on it, is being converted into a bistro bar, part of the ASK chain.

# Plough Inn festival

Dave Cogdell

The **Plough Inn** at Clifton Hampden held their first beer and music festival on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July. This lovely old thatched pub with timber beams and inglenook fireplaces is now being run by landlady Rachel, husband Paul and daughters Kaleigh (pictured) & Corrin.

The beers on tap were Alfies & Vicars Daughter from the Best Mates Brewery in Ardington near Wantage, Power station and Brightwell Gold from the Appleford brewery plus Village Idiot and Flibbertygibbit from Whitehorse brewery, all at a extremely reasonable £2 a pint, complimenting the Bombadier & Bass in the bar.

Not a large festival by some standards but they did not want to go over board at their first attempt.



All the beers were in good condition and our table voted the Power Station to be the best with Alfies a very close second. There were several bands playing throughout the festival and the event also raised funds to aid Helen & Douglas House.



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# Oxfordshire pub of the year



Neil Hoggarth

On Wednesday the 16th July, four members of the newly elected branch committee had the very enjoyable task of going over to Wantage to represent the branch at the presentation of the certificate for the Oxfordshire Pub of the Year award to the **Royal Oak in Wantage** (12 Newbury St, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 8DF).

The Royal Oak has been a favourite pub of mine ever since I first visited to survey for regional pub of the year some ten years ago, and I'm obviously not the only CAMRA member who thinks so; the lounge has various award certificates from Oxford, Berkshire and Vale of the White Horse branches, dating from the 1980s right up to modern times.

The 2008 County Pub of the Year certificate that will join the collection was presented by Jackie Parker, regional director for central southern CAMRA, and received by the landlord Paul Hexter. Also present

enjoying the pub's hospitality was the Mayor of Wantage, Padrick O'Leary, representatives from various local CAMRA branches, and from Wadworths brewery (the pub is a free house but Wadworth 6X served "from the wood" has long been a staple beer).



For the special occasion the pub had an even wider range of beers on than usual, served a free buffet, and some of the regulars had provided a cake featuring a very good picture of the pub.

With half-a-dozen real ales on at any one time, all in good condition, it is easy to see why the pub is popular with CAMRA members. It does really well on the other criteria used to judge



the Pub of the Year competition: the service and welcome is good, it offers excellent value for money and, perhaps most importantly, it is a real community pub with a good mix of customers.

The Royal Oak now goes forward into the next round of the Regional Pub of the Year competition, where it is up against the Berks nomination, the Bird in Hand and the Bucks nomination, the Hop Pole. Reviews of those pubs, and news of the regional winner, in the next issue of the Oxford Drinker.

## Festival round-up



Neil Hoggarth

### Summer Beer Festival at the General Elliot

Friday 27th - Sunday 28th June

I had suggested a branch social on the Friday night, since several members (including myself) had other trips planned for Saturday afternoon - it is difficult for a beer drinker to pack in all the beer festivals and outings that tend to congregate in this part of the

calendar! There was a modest turn-out on Friday from the branch, with the Abingdon contingent being well represented.

The festival featured 12 beers from 10 different small breweries, plus the regular beers from Vale Brewery, and represented a good mix of different styles. On the dark and malty side I particularly

enjoyed the Mighty Oak "Oscar Wilde Mild" and Dark Star "Old Ale". On the golden hoppy side there were a number of well received beers - I was particularly pleased to make a re-acquaintance with RCH "Pitchfork", which has been a favourite of mine ever since it became a regular beer at the Wharf House some years ago.



I popped back on Sunday evening for a few more pints, and the beers were selling out. John Westendorp (the landlord) tells me that event went well, and he is planning another for September.

**Haddenham Real Ale Festival  
Saturday 5th July**

This was the fifth annual festival held at the Haddenham Youth and Community Centre. Haddenham is between Thame and Aylesbury, and is easy to reach from Oxford on the 280 bus. I have always managed to miss this festival in previous years, but have heard very good things about it from other members of the branch. Apart from myself there wasn't much of a turnout from Oxford this year, but there were plenty of familiar faces in attendance - North Oxfordshire and Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe

branches been strongly represented.

The festival featured over 50 real ales, and about 20 real ciders and perries. Unusually, the organization of the beer list and stillage is alphabetical by name of beer (rather than by name of brewery, the way a CAMRA festival would normally sort things). Along with the beer there were plenty of other attractions throughout the afternoon: stalls, live music and the Owlswick morris dancers (with a real live barn owl as a mascot!).

It is a very well attended event. I initially thought that the beer list was rather ambitious for a one day event, but the bar was thronged with customers by mid-afternoon and some of

the beers were already running out when I left in the late afternoon.

Another festival is already planned for 4th July next year, as well as a winterfest on 29th November this year.

**Merton Summer Beer Festival  
Friday 19th - Saturday 20th  
July**

Another community fund-raising festival celebrating its fifth year, the two Merton beer festivals (winter festival in February and summer festival in July) have



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become favourite events with the branch. This summer the public transport arrangements worked out better than last year, with nine of us managing to rendezvous with the 94 bus on Friday evening for the trip out to Merton. The Friday evening session was busier than I have ever seen it before. As well as our own branch, North Oxfordshire CAMRA were out in force, with some of them camping on site to make the most of the Saturday session too!

There were 28 real ales, with a good mix of milds, standard bitters, golden beers and a few porters and stouts (which are often quite difficult to source at this time of year). All the beers were in top form. My favourites were probably the Bank Top Dark Mild, and a fruity best bitter from High House Farm brewery in Newcastle, "Maften Magic".

The festival kept up its reputation for excellent glassware, with elegant half-pints in the style of a continental lager glass and substantial handled tankard-style pints. Special mention must also go to the attractive presentation to the festival programme/tasting notes and the laminated cask-end cards, which featured large coloured printing of the "pump clip" logos for every beer on the list.



## credits....

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