



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

ISSUE 56
May - June 2009



the Oxford Drinker

Oxford Local Pubs Week

With the most recent Beer & Pub Association report highlighting that 5 pubs are closing every day, CAMRA has to do more than ever to support local pubs through these difficult times.

CAMRA has launched a new campaign called Local Pubs Week for 2009 that aims to raise the profile and importance of pubs in the community; encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to use community pubs and visit the pub more often than they currently do; and

encourage pubs to organise events during the week to entice more trade.

The Oxford Branch has chosen 16 to 24 May as its local pubs week+. Events are currently in the planning stage but will include a launch event on Saturday 16, a pub games evening at the Mason's Arms on Thursday 21, and a branch social at the Turf Tavern on Saturday 23.

In addition to the events planned, we are also having a Local Pubs Trail to encourage drinkers to visit a selection of the many splendid locals in our branch area. The idea will be to visit a number of the selected pubs which are spread across the area, collecting stickers on a trail card as

you go, and then returning the completed cards to us for a chance to win one of a number of prizes.

There are some 300 pubs in the branch area. Many of these are splendid locals that don't receive much publicity or recognition. The aim of the trail is to highlight some good pubs serving great beer that people often might not think to visit.

Details of the events and trail will be added the branch diary page on the website and circulated to the events mailing list. Trail cards will be available from all those pubs included.

**Support your local
and have fun!**

inside this issue:

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

Stocks beer festival
Abingdon survey crawl
Cricketer's Arms festival
festival and branch diaries



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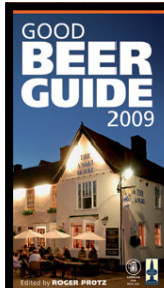
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It was with great sadness that the branch learned in early March of the death of **John Dunkley**, recently landlord of the **Ampleforth Arms** in Risinghurst. Before moving to there late last year, John had previously run the Chester Arms and some years ago the Marlborough House in Grandpont. He established the Chester Arms as a popular, family-friendly pub with a lively programme of events, and good beer. He was always a genial and welcoming host whenever the branch visited, be it for a branch meeting or a gathering at one of the Chester's summer beer festivals. In recent months he has been of great help to the local branch in our press campaign to highlight the difficulties facing local pubs. He will be missed, and we would like to take this opportunity to extend our sympathy and condolences to the family, friends and regulars that he leaves behind.

The **Red Lion**, Old Marston, is another

victim of Greene King's ludicrous policy of pricing their own licensees out of business. We're very sad to see Keith leave after all his hard work there.

The **Duke of Monmouth** has now reopened under a new tenancy, the sign outside advertising opening hours 9am - 12.15am and "Swiss Cuisine". The kitchen has been extensively refitted, reflecting a greater emphasis on high quality food by the new management, but most of the bar areas are unchanged and non-dining drinkers are definitely welcome. The cask beers are limited to Greene King IPA and Abbot, but both were in excellent condition when sampled recently.

The Rowing Machine (Greene King) in Witney is currently closed apparently pending the replacement of the landlord. This large estate style pub has recently lacked inspiration. On a recent visit the only cask ales was a poor IPA.

The Saddlers at New

Yatt, although an eating place, serves good ales and using the Marstons portfolio should see a varying choice.

The Evenlode, Eynsham, was reportedly to be demolished but planning permission has been currently refused. This is a large free-standing building on the A40 with lots of garden/lawn surrounding it. It seems to have had a multitude of operators in recent times and tried hard to push food.

Around the corner, **The Star** was closed at the start of April but has now reopened under Admiral Taverns with a temporary manager from Carlisle. There is likely to be a change from an eating to a drinkers' public house.

The Boot Inn, at nearby Barnard Gate, has purchased **The Bell** at Standlake, which was a GK undertaking and has been closed for 6 months. Changes will be to return it to a traditional style pub, hopefully in operation toward the end of the summer.

Continued page 19

Abingdon crawl 1

Neil Hoggarth



On a Saturday afternoon in late February a small group branch members and friends gathered for an Abingdon centre pub crawl. Several of the active Abingdon members and some of their friends came along, but the turnout from further afield was rather disappointing, to be honest, with only myself from Oxford and one member from Kidlington braving the 20 minute X3 bus ride south.

This is the first of three planned Abingdon visits, which together are intended to form a comprehensive survey of the pubs of the town – the first that we have done since 2005.

Brewery Tap, Ock Street

For the meeting point our organiser had chosen one of the established CAMRA favourites in the town. The Brewery Tap is well known to the branch, having featured regularly in the Good Beer Guide in recent years, and hosted a number of local branch meetings. The

pub was created in 1993 by Morland, by converting three Grade II listed town houses. The attractive interior features panelled walls, stone floors and real fire.



There was live football playing on several TV screens around the pub, for those who wanted to watch, but these were not intrusive or distracting. We were met with a good welcome, and I took the opportunity to lunch on the special of the day (an excellent beef stew) before the day's drinking. There were five real ales on offer, three from the Greene King stable (Hardy and Hanson's Bitter, Hardy and Hanson's Olde Trip, and Morland Original) and two guests (Batemans XXXB and Holdon's Golden Glow). All the beer sampled was in good form. Most of the

party concentrated on the guest beers, since we knew that we would be seeing a lot of Greene King products throughout the afternoon!

The Grapes, High Street

The Grapes was shut, and had one of the all-too-familiar Greene King "Business Opportunity" estate agent boards on display.

Blue Boar, Bath Street

We paid a very brief visit, just long enough to establish that no real ale was on sale and moved on. When the survey party visited in 2005 they commented that the pub "did little to excite", but at least they found cask conditioned Tetley Bitter at £1.59 per pint...

Black Swan, Bath Street

Another ex-Morland Greene King pub, the Black Swan comes across as a rough and ready basic town centre boozer, with sports on various large screen TVs. Keg lager seems to be the main focus.

There are three hand-pumps but only one was in operation when we visited, and I am told this is the normal state of affairs. The one beer on offer was Morland Original, and we had a swift round of halves.



The beer quality was average. One aspect that is worthy of positive comment is that a glass with an oversized head was topped up by the lady who serving, on her own initiative, entirely unprompted by any comment from us. Thumbs up on the weights and measures front, but apart from that there was not really anything to make us linger in the pub.

Plough, Stert Street

Next, a change from the "formerly Morland, now Greene King" pattern: the Plough is an ex-Morrells pub which is now a Greene King pub! It is on the corner of the old station yard (though the branch line that used

to connect Abingdon to the Great Western mainline at Radley is long gone, unfortunately). Another busy, single-bar



town centre pub, featuring fruit machines, quiz machines and the Saturday racing on big screen TV. There is more of a real-ale offering here though, with two Greene King brewed beers on sale: IPA and Hardy and Hanson's Olde Trip. I had the Greene King IPA and found it to be in good form, with a nice clean and hoppy taste. This matches what the review from 2005 says - it is encouraging to find that one of the recommended pubs of our last survey is still serving a good pint four years later.

Punchbowl, Market Place

The Punchbowl is one of the fine old buildings of Abingdon, dating

originally to the 1570s, with an excellent position looking over the market square. It has been a pub since 1775, and has been known as the Coach and Horses and the Fleur de Leys in the past. The front bar has a bit of a reputation for being rowdy - in his 2005 write-up Matt Bullock describes "a posse of drunken people, all singing loudly along to the jukebox, and a few who were dancing wildly too". Although it didn't sound quite that lively when we visited, we headed straight for the lounge bar at the back (which has an entrance on East St Helen Street).



The snug lounge is attractively wooden panelled. Like so many of the pubs of Abingdon the Punchbowl is ex-Morland and now

Greene King, and the beers on offer were Morland Original and Hardy and Hanson's Olde Trip. I had the Morland Original, and found it to be extremely good - one of the best examples of the beer that I have had in a long time. In my opinion Original has not fared well since Greene King closed the Morland brewery and moved the brewing of the "Morland" branded beers to Bury St Edmunds in 2000; the GK version is generally too sweet, bland and is often inconsistent in taste and colour. The pint that I had in the Punchbowl, however, seemed to have real echoes of the astringent, bitter beer that Morland used to brew.

Stocks Bar, Bridge St
And finally, a respite from Greene King beers! In the last few years the Stocks, the pub attached to the Crown and Thistle Hotel, has become a popular part of the Abingdon real ale scene. They have recently made changes to the cellar and beer lines to accommodate more real beer, and now feature 8 hand-pumps on the bar.

Beers on offer at the day of our visit included: Brakspear Bitter; Marsons Old Empire; Slaters Premium; White Horse Porter; White Horse Village Idiot; Wychwood Dirty Tackle; Wychwood Hobgoblin. The exact beer line up changes all the time. If that were not enough, the pub was also serving 6 different real ciders/ perries from Westons: 1st Quality; Bounds Brand; Country Perry; Old Rosie; Traditional Scrumpy; Vintage Organic. Admittedly some of that impressive range was probably left over from the pub's recent winter ales

festival rather than being typical, but there is a definite commitment to real cider along side the real ale which is excellent to see. We started off with a round of White Horse Porters - this is a beautiful beer, and was served in excellent condition. Despite it having been quite a long day by this point, we felt obliged to do quality control on several of the other beers after that, and found them to be similarly well-kept. After that there was a photo opportunity featuring the eponymous stocks. "It seemed like a good idea at the time..."

LOGO DESIGN COMPETITION

This year **Oxford City CAMRA** will be holding its **12th Beer Festival**.

Again we welcome submissions for this year's beer festival logo.

The design needs to be one colour, use limited shading (if any) and be quite 'compact' as it is printed in black on our glasses, as well as used for the programme and T-shirts.

Forward entries to Sam (editor@)
by 30th June at the very latest

See previous logo designs on the Beer Festival section of the website.

beer festival diary



Thurs 30 April - Sun 3 May
Reading CAMRA Beer & Cider Festival

King's Meadow, Reading
www.readingbeerfestival.org.uk

Thurs 7 - Sat 9 May
Banbury Beer Festival

TA Centre, Banbury
www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk

Fri 15 - Sun 17 May
3rd Stratford-upon-Avon Beer & Cider Festival

Stratford-upon-Avon Racecourse

Sat 16 - Sun 17 May
White Hart Beer Festival

St Andrews Road, Old Headington, Oxford
20+ beers and ciders, BBQ

Fri 22 - Mon 25 May
(bank holiday weekend)
Waggon & Horses 7th Annual Beer Festival

Faringdon Road, Southmoor

Thurs 28 - Sat 30 May
Northamptonshire Beer Festival

Delapre Abbey, London Road, Northampton
200+ beers, ciders & perrys
www.northantscamra.org.uk

Thurs 28 - Sat 30 May
13th Southampton Beer Festival

Guildhall, West Marlands Road, Southampton
80+ real ales, foreign beers, cider & perry
www.shantscamra.org.uk

Thurs 28 - Sat 30 May
34th Wolverhampton Beer Festival

Wulfrun Hall, Mitre Fold, Wolverhampton
www.wolverhamptoncamra.org.uk

Sat 30 May
6th Great Chadlington Beer Festival

Memorial Hall, Spelsbury Road, Chadlington
14+ beers, plus cider, perry & wine
www.chadlingtonbeerfestival.com

Sat 6 & Sun 7 June
Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Ale & Steam Weekend

Winchcombe Station, Greet, nr Cheltenham
14 beers plus ciders
www.northcotswoldcamra.org.uk/Steam1.htm

Sat 13 June
Candleford Fayre & Beer Festival

Fringford Cricket Ground, Fringford, nr Bicester
20 beers plus cider & perry

Saturday 13 June
Jericho Street Fair

Old Bookbinders, Victor Street, Oxford
01865 553549
www.oldbookbinders.co.uk

Tues 16 - Sat 20 June
Far from the Madding Crowd Summer Beer Festival

Friars Entry, Oxford
01865 240900
www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

Sat 27 June
Chipping Norton Rugby Club Beer Festival

Greystones, Burford Road
20 beers, ciders & perries
www.cnruic.co.uk

Fri 3 - Sun 5 July
Beer on the Wye V

Hereford Rowing Club
www.herefordcamra.org.uk

Sat 4 July
12th Charlbury Beer Festival

Charlbury Cricket Club
www.charlburybeerfestival.org

Sat 4 July
Haddenham Real Ale Festival

Youth & Community Centre
www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk

Wed 8 - Sun 12 July
Greenwich Beer & Jazz Festival

Old Royal Naval College
www.greenwichbeerandjazz.com

**For further details of the festivals shown
and more, and updates**

on events, please visit our website at

www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

what's on

Tuesday 5th May

7.30pm

EGM and Branch Meeting

Eagle Tavern, 22 Corn
Street, Witney, OX28 6BL.

Saturday 16 May

TBC

Local Pubs Week -

Launch Event

Details to be posted on the
website

Thursday 21st May

7pm

Local Pubs Week - Pub

Games Evening

Mason's Arms, 2 Quarry
School Place, Headington
Quarry, Oxford, OX3 8LH.

Saturday 23rd May

7pm

Local Pubs Week -

Branch Social

Turf Tavern, 4 Bath Place,
Oxford, OX1 1SU.

Coinciding with John
Mackie, the branch Public
Transport Officer's 70th
Birthday!!

Saturday 30th May

1pm

Abingdon Survey Crawl

Meet at the Broad Face,
Bridge Street, Abingdon,
OX14 3HR.

Wednesday 3rd June

7.30pm

Branch Meeting

Cricketers Arms,
Littleworth, OX33 1TR.

Saturday 13th June

1pm

Regional Meeting

Hop Pole Inn, 83
Bicester Road,
Aylesbury, HP19 9AZ.

Saturday 20th June

All day

Black Country pub

crawl

Details to be posted on
the website

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Cricketer's Arms Festival

Neil Hoggarth

Cricketer's Arms Beer and Sausage Festival, Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd February

The Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth ran a "Sausage Festival" last year. This sounded intriguing, but I was away the weekend in question and so missed the event. This year they announced that they would follow up with a Beer and Sausage Festival: two of my favourite things in one event - there was no way I was going to miss out this time around! The obvious day to go would have been Saturday. Unfortunately there was a CAMRA Regional Meeting in Henley already arranged for Saturday 21st, which several branch officers were already committed to attending. We therefore arranged a branch social for the Sunday afternoon.

There is no direct bus from Oxford to Littleworth on a Sunday (weekday and Saturday daytimes one can catch the Heyfordian 103/104), so several of us caught

the U1 to Wheatley and then made the 10 or 15 minute stroll down the road to Littleworth. When we arrived we found that the Abingdon contingent of the branch were already at the pub, having persuaded an unfortunate one of their number to take on the role of "designated driver". We joined them at their table and started sizing up both the beer list and the sausage menu.



The beers were all sourced from local independent brewers within 36 miles of the pub - a collection of breweries which the Cricketer's calls the "six sixes portfolio". This emphasis on sourcing good quality local beer has strong resonances with the CAMRA "LocAle" accreditation scheme, promoting the reduction of "beer miles"

and the support of local breweries, though the Cricketer's were doing it before we jumped on the band-waggon! The breweries represented were: Appleford (brewery to pub: 12.4 miles); Archers (Swindon, B2P: 34.5 miles); Best Mates (Wantage, B2P: 18.7 miles); Hook Norton (B2P: 27.3 miles); Loddon (Dunsden, B2P: 24.2 miles); Marlow (B2P: 22.7); Old Bog (Headington, B2P: 4.0 miles); Tring (B2P: 24.0 miles); Vale (Brill, B2P: 9.9 miles); West Berkshire (Yattendon, B2P: 24.6); White Horse (Stanford-in-the-Vale, B2P: 20.5). The Hook Norton beers were on hand-pumps, the rest of the beers were dispensed "on gravity" straight from the casks, which were stillaged in a room at the back of the pub.



I am told that the festival did very good trade on Friday and Saturday, so we were quite lucky to find all the beers were still available when we turned up on the last day. We were warned by those in the know that several of the casks were running low, and the beers did start to run out during the afternoon. The most popular (first to sell out) was the "Good Old Boy Extra", from West Berks. Once we had secured a few halves of the most endangered of the beers that we wanted to try, it was time to turn our

attention to food. The menu consisted of a wide variety of specialist sausages, all served with mash and gravy. Unfortunately I can't remember all the flavours on offer, and neglected to make proper notes (hopefully excusable, having sampled most of the twelve different beers in three hours!). I do recall that I had some excellent pork chipolatas, and that John Mackie greatly enjoyed his Lamb and Mint sausages. John had received a tip-off that the sticky toffee pudding was particularly good,

and was disappointed to discover that this was sold out. Personally I was happy to just get stuck back into the beers for "dessert"!

The beers were all interesting brews, and were served in fine form. The event was very well attended, and it was a real pleasure to see the locals supporting their pub in significant numbers. We hope to see more of the same in the future!

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Around the county

Tony Goulding



Visiting the 130 pubs in the branch area in west Oxfordshire is a useful and enjoyable way of finding out what is going on in the ever changing pub scene. Car sharing and the odd Minibus trip by branch members is a regular event. To find out more give us a call. A recent trip to four pubs turned up the following.

Ducklington, almost a suburb of Witney, is a pretty sprawling and affluent village with 2 different and very old pubs. **The Bell** for many years a Courage house now run by Greene King is one of the oldest pubs in the county with parts of the building dating from 1150. This mainly locals, comfortable, friendly well run house has a real fire and a rare real 60s/70s jukebox. The Bell looks like an old farmhouse and on entering you notice on the old bar top Real Old Rosie cider along with the normal Greene King products, IPA and Morland Original. Food is served from an imaginative menu.

Around the corner, **The Strickland Arms** a Walworth's house for the last 20 years comes into view looking very much the 17th century farmhouse pub it is. Dispensing Wadworth 6X and Henrys IPA in good condition the Strickland appears to be a well run food pub but never the less manages to successfully run darts and aunt sally teams. Local drinkers are well cared for in this low beamed two bar building along with summer time outside drinking areas front and back. The landlord has been here for 10 years now and after reminiscing previous years drinking experiences it was apparent that he was involved in the legendary Gales pubs - The Pack Horse, Pack Saddle and The Fox near Mapledurham, Reading - with myself in the early 90s.

Moving on to **The Lord Kitchener** (splendid name) at Curbridge (The Merry Horn closed in the 80s), this 18th century long fronted former

Morrells was well known for fine food even back in the 80s. Now just another Greene King pub the Kitchener still serves good food and is part of the local community.

The final call of the night, **The Masons Arms**, has been a free house for many years and has seen several changes of landlord in recent years. The other pub in the village is another typical Greene King food pub **The Chequers** - the cosy Carpenters closed 30 years ago. The Masons another old stone farmhouse type of pub is very much a comfortable locals haunt serving 3 differing guest beers in reasonable condition, these being on the night Highgate Irish Whisky Ale (a rare brewery in these parts) along with Sharps Doom Bar and Wychwood Paddys Stout. Well worth a visit!

Look out for more of these informative tours and tell us of any news, good and bad, and correct my mistakes.

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* For non Direct Debit prices, Young Member and concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus

credits....

The Oxford Drinker is the newsletter of Oxford CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale. The next publication will be in May 2009.

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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valuable contributions have been received for this issue from:

Ray Borrett, Dave Cogdell, Tony Goulding, Neil Hoggarth, Richard Queralt et al.

photos courtesy of:

Dan McHugh, Dave and Stuart Bull

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at excellent rates from:

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Stocks Beer Festival



The Stocks Bar in the Crown & Thistle Hotel in Abingdon held the second of its four beer festivals planned for 2009 from 3rd to 6th April. This turned out to be their most successful festival yet, enhanced by live music every day, first-rate ale and with the bonus of excellent weather.

There were a very good selection of beers, many from local breweries, and a range of good ciders. The Friday evening was so well attended that nearly half the festival ale stock was consumed, however emergency deliveries were arranged by the bar manager, increasing the festival from over 22 barrels to 39, all of which were dispensed by the end of the festival.

The live music included jazz on the Friday evening, a blues band on the Saturday and a great swing band (pictured) playing in the courtyard on



the Sunday, all of which brought in people from the local area and beyond.

There were some outstanding and unusual beers including Vanilla Porter from the Box Steam Brewery and Sump, from the relatively new Pitstop Brewery in nearby Grove, which at 7% is a dangerous brew for the unsuspecting.

The festival had a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, created by a wide range of people of all age groups. Many Oxford branch members attended at least one of the sessions and we all look forward to the next Stocks beer festival later this year.

useful camra contacts

Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe
David Roe
01296 484 551
dwrss@aol.com

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contact@northoxfordshire
camra.org.uk
www.northoxfordshirecamra.
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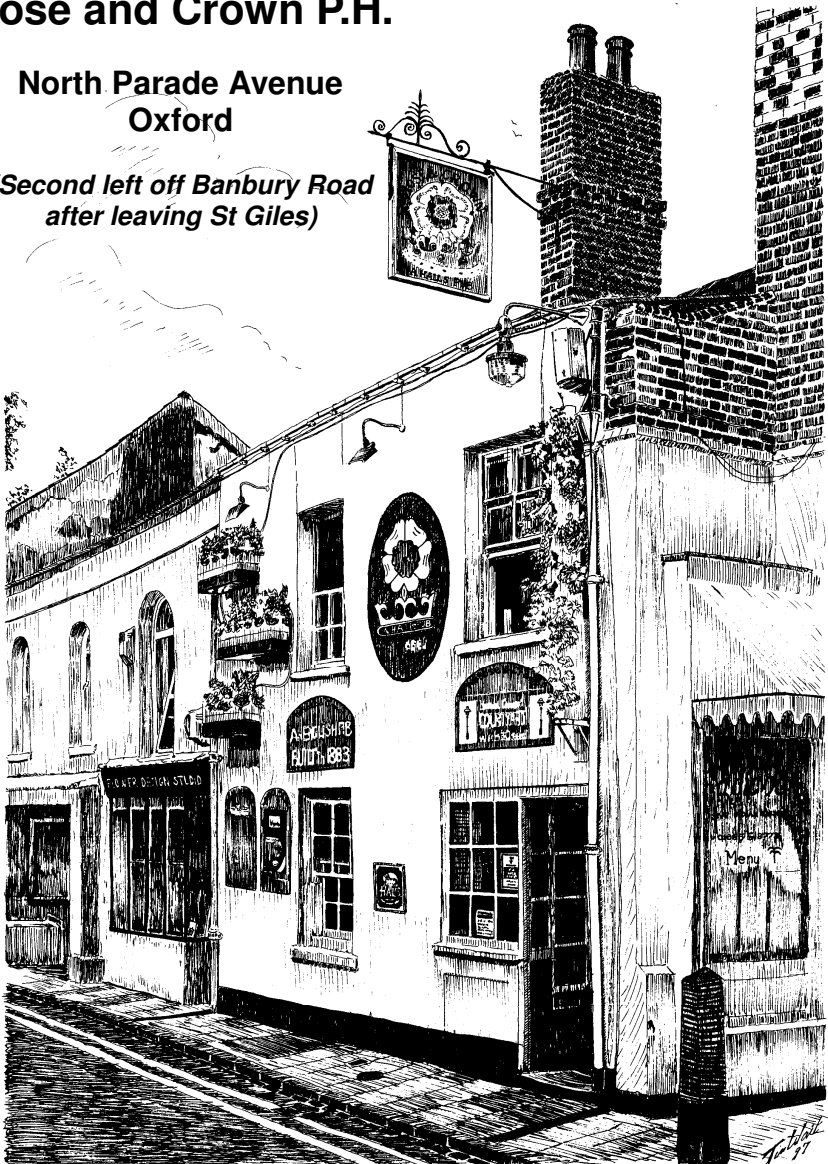
CAMRA
230 Hatfield Road
St Albans, Hertfordshire
AL1 4LW
01727 867201
camra@camra.org.uk
www.camra.org.uk

Oxford Trading Standards
01865 815000

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

The nearby, **Black Horse** continues to have excellent and changing ales. It is interesting how effective a good British welcome can be to a pub: the landlady is usually customer-side and the endless supply of roast peanuts on the bar are remarkably moreish.

The landlord from **The Bell** moved to the Red Lion at Northmoor. The week before Easter, his daughter Liz, with partner Derek Weir as landlord, started to breathe new life into it. Initially there will be London Pride and


Ringwood Bitter, but it will vary. A third pump will be available when new lines are installed.

Further up the hill, **The Griffin** is evolving into a very gratifying tavern under a landlord whose family have eons of experience.

The **Clanfield Tavern**, has 3 well kept and ever changing good ales. His encouragement to non-ale drinkers is for them to try his range by offering third pint glasses.

The **Halfpenny Brewery** at Lechlade is brewing to capacity but the problem is where to put its new equipment to increase brew volume! The brewery can be seen through a glass wall in the garden of **The Crown Inn**.

The Plough at Kelmscott, near Lechlade, is mainly an eating pub, but with a reputation for good beers. It will shortly reopen following extensive flood damage refurbishment, including sustainable ground source heating.



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HEADINGTON

Renowned for the quality of our Fullers Ales
Open All Day Seven Days a Week
True Value for Money Food Served 12 - 9 Daily and Sunday Roast Available

Warm Welcome Assured With Our Real Log Fire and Covered Heated Patio -
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Sunday Night Quiz from 9pm
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Roy and James, 5 Wilberforce Street, Headington, Oxford OX3 7AN
Past the shark, first left, first right

"LAST ONE BACK GETS THEM IN."



THE 3RD ASCOT RACECOURSE BEER FESTIVAL

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- Exclusive HALF PRICE admission for CAMRA members – prices from just £4.89 on Friday and £9.79 on Saturday.
- Excellent programme of racing.
- Over 150 real ales, ciders and perries to sample supplied predominantly from local craft brewers. All at £1.25 per half pint and £2.50 per pint. Free tasting notes provided.
- Hot and cold food available all day.
- Gates and Bars open at 11am. Last orders 4.55pm on Friday and 5.30pm on Saturday.
- Live music on both days.
- Free parking or a 7 minute walk from Ascot Railway Station.

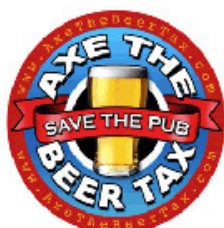


To book tickets, call **0870 727 1234**
or visit ascot.co.uk quote CAMRA09.

Ascot
The World's Most Famous Racecourse



Stock's BEER FESTIVAL



Crown and Thistle Hotel, Abingdon, OX14 5US, 01235 522556

Friday 21ST – Monday 24TH August 2009

30+ Ales and 10 real Cider.

(Full info in the next issue of the drinker)

*We now provide 4 pint
flagons free of charge
so you can take away
Real Ale and Real Cider
to enjoy at home or on
a picnic.*



*Stock's Ale or Cider
Platter- Choose 3
different Ales or
Ciders and receive a
1/3 pint of each for
only £2.50!*



Current hand pump selection

Brakspear Bitter 3.4%

Marstons Old Empire 5.7%

A mild will be permanently available

4 other weekly changing guest ales

7 Real ciders including Old Rosie 7.3%



Are you a member of CAMRA?

If so show your membership card at the bar when ordering and you will receive a 20 pence discount on every pint of Real Ale or Real Cider purchased. You will also receive 25% off food ordered in the Stocks Bar. If you're not a member, join up now – application form page 15.