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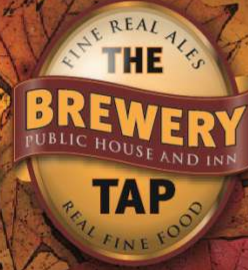
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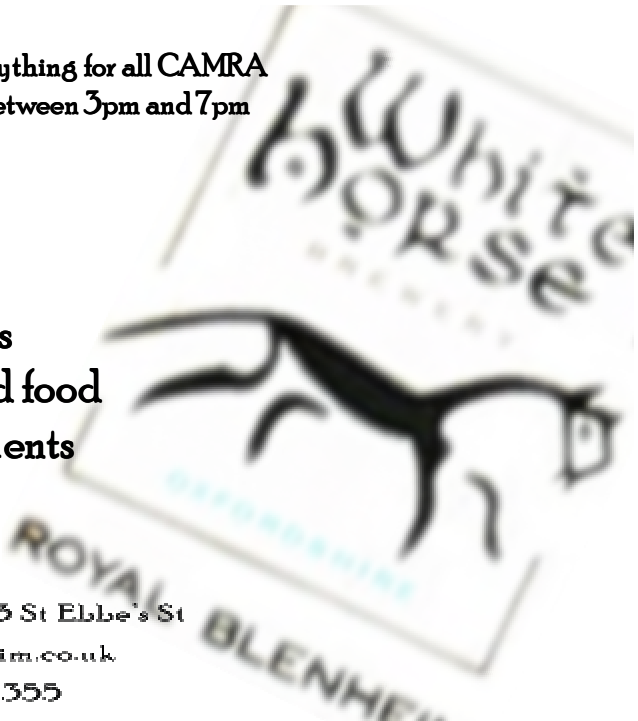
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The **Oxford Drinker** is the newsletter of the Oxford and White Horse branches of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

5000 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs across the two branches' area, including Oxford, Abingdon, Witney, Faringdon, Eynsham, Kidlington, Bampton, Wheatley and Wantage and most of the villages in between.

This newsletter is also available to download in pdf format from our website oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker

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Please send contributions to the editor at the above email address.

Pub news can be sent to
pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk

The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of Oxford or White Horse Branches of CAMRA, or of CAMRA Limited.

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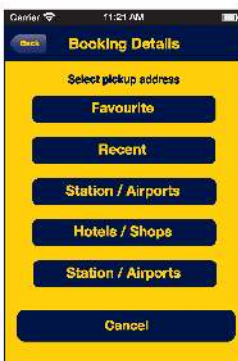
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Welcome

...to the Boomtown Vats

BRITAIN'S pubs may still be struggling with high taxes, high rents, high business rates and high wholesale beer prices, but real ale is booming and a key factor in the success of many pubs. Record demand for traditional ales and ciders helped drinks sales at J.D. Wetherspoon grow by 3.8% in its last financial year, contributing to record profits. Wetherspoon has now arrived in Abingdon, its fifth pub in our branch area, and a town which has a new entry in the Good Beer Guide for 2014 – the Nag's Head. Is it any coincidence that the recently derelict but now revitalised Nag's Head sells eight real ales, as well as great food?

The guide reveals that 187 new breweries have opened in the UK in the last year, bringing the total to nearly 1,150 producing over 5,200 beers. In this edition of the Oxford Drinker you will read how our local area is following the trend with new micro-breweries, to join our established small independent brewers. Oxfordshire also has a new cider producer, Orchard Cottage near Chalgrove. Congratulations to the other new local entrants in the 2014 Good Beer Guide, which are the Angel and Greyhound, the Grapes and the Rose and Crown, all in Oxford. Commiserations to those who have dropped out, but we know they will all make strong bids for inclusion in 2015. Meanwhile, voting is under way for the City Pub of the Year, with forms available in all participating pubs and a deadline of 4

December to get your votes in. See page 19 for the listing. Voting has now closed in Oxford CAMRA's Town and Country Pub of the Year, but all six pubs shortlisted are profiled in this edition.

My editorial duties took me to the Great British Beer Festival in London's Olympia in August, and again the evidence of a booming industry was there to see. Over 800 beers, ciders and perries were available, and the Champion Beers of Britain were announced with a porter, once regarded as a drink of the past, the overall winner.

But before we become too self-congratulatory about the success of real ale, let's not forget that many pubs are suffering and there is news of more closures and threatened closures in the pages that follow. CAMRA reckons that if beer drinkers buy just one extra pint a month, the pubs industry would return to growth. If one will take that pledge.

In closing may I welcome Tony Goulding as the new chairman of Oxford CAMRA, who will be at the wheel of a minibus in the months ahead to help members visit some of our outlying pubs.

News of pubs, breweries and beer festivals is always welcome here at the Oxford Drinker, as are ideas for longer articles. Use the contact details provided, with the deadline for the December/January edition being 8th November.

DAVE RICHARDSON



It's that time of year again...

OXFORD Beer and Cider Festival gets under way on October 17th, our 16th year at Oxford's Town Hall. Dates and opening times are shown at the foot of this page.

Those who have visited before will notice only a few changes from previous years. As always, our band of 100 or so volunteers have given up their spare time to make the event happen; it's not too late to volunteer, so do so if you can spare a few hours.

We will once again offer an unrivalled choice of beer, with 150 different brews on sale, with a further 40 duplicates for the Saturday morning as well as 50 ciders and perries.

This year our venue has a reduced fire limit, so we recommend you get here early to ensure that you can get in without a long wait.

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first we take Oxford..... then we take Berlin!

In July a group of Oxford CAMRA members made the trip to Berlin. **Chris Hunter, Sam French and Dave Cogdell** attempt to recall some of the sights, beers and bars.

THIS YEAR'S branch social to foreign climes saw nine of our branch members travel to Germany to soak up the sights, sounds and tastes of Berlin. Our trip started with an early morning flight from Luton airport, arriving at our hotel situated in the prime location of Alexanderplatz, in what was old East Berlin, right next door to the train station and adjacent to the Berlin TV tower – a very impressive sight.

After dropping off the bags we decided to head off along the Unter den Linden, past the museums and Berlin University buildings to visit the impressive Brandenburg Gate. Time to wet the whistle and our first stop was a lovely restaurant/bar, Theodor Tucher, which had a good selection of both draught (from the Weihenstephaner range) and bottled beers. The *Hefe Weissbier* wheat beer and

the *Tradition dunkel* dark beer were particularly good.

We headed off to check out the Reichstag building which required pre-registration, so we decided to proceed across the Tiergarten to the Sony Centre in Potsdamer Platz, a huge glass and steel mall housing cafes, bars, shops and a cinema. We stopped off in the Alex Brauhouse, which was spread over three floors with a balcony giving panoramic views of the centre. This Brauhouse offered a good selection of beers but sadly their micro-brewery was shut down, although the equipment is still on show.

Next stop was a lovely bar the Mommseneck, situated to the rear of the centre in Potsdamer Platz and named after the first German, Professor Theodor Mommsen, a historian and jurist, to be given the Nobel

Prize for literature. It was billed as "The house of a hundred beers" and there were plenty of draught and bottled beers to choose from. We tried several but the favourites seemed to be Berliner and Erdinger Pilsner on draught.

The rest of the afternoon was spent visiting some of the sights in the ex-East Germany side of the city, which has undergone an amazing transformation since the fall of the wall. One particular site of special interest was the Holocaust memorial. On the way back to our hotel area we stopped off at a little bar, The Brauhaus Lemke, which was built under the arches of a railway line near the station. There was a selection of beers from their own brew plant including an original pils, a wheat beer and an Imperial Stout at 8%.



LEFT: The impressive atrium of the Sony Centre is the home to the Alex Brauhaus.

ABOVE: Brewing vessels on show in the Georgbrau brew pub

Evening was spent closer to home in the Propststraße area, starting at the Brauhaus Georgbrau which had its own microbrewery. The last part of call for most of us was the Zum Nusbaum (The Walnut Tree) which has an enormous steep roof and looks very old. However, not all is what it seems. To celebrate Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987, the East German authorities decided to recreate a piece of old Berlin, complete with narrow streets, to replicate the feel of an old town centre. Until 1943 it was Berlin's oldest pub, dating from 1571, when it fell victim to Allied bombs. It was not however in the town centre, and was chosen for reconstruction because, as the oldest pub, there were many detailed photos to work from. Inside there are several small rooms with quaint old furniture to match the pub design.

Friday started with breakfast in one of the hotel restaurants followed by a trip up to the Berlin TV tower for 360 degree panoramic views of the city – marvellous. We then headed off, in the sunshine, for a stroll along the riverside and commercial districts to Checkpoint Charlie, the history of which was described on hoardings interlaced with bits of the old wall. We happened upon a beach in no-man's land, between the old east and west sides of the wall, complete with palm trees and deck chairs – how surreal. There was a bar and some food stalls, so we treated ourselves to a beer and a bratwurst with chips.

Refreshed, we headed off along the remnants of the wall to the Topography of Terror, located in the grounds of Hitler's SS and the Gestapo Headquarters. The

centre, opened in 2010, provides historical information on National Socialism and its heinous crimes and is a site of remembrance and learning, a must-see but a grim experience.

The next couple of hours were spent wandering through the Teirgarten park, heading to the Charlottenburg district where we had a list of bars to visit. We were more than happy to find the Café am Neuen See, a beer garden next door to Berlin zoo. It had only a couple of draught beers on offer along with a bottled wheat beer, but needs must.

Next stop was the Dicke Wirtin (fat lady) bar which was probably the best bar we visited that day. We were greeted by images of the fat hostess herself – this was Anna Stanscheck, an imposing lady

continued overleaf ►



famous for her big heart, monstrous stews and love for the students of the nearby art college. The staff were friendly, and the excellent draught beer range included Flensburger Pils, Schneider-Weisse, Berliner Kindl Jubiläums Pils, Mönchshof Schwarzbier, and König Pils (4.9%), a pale golden pilsner from a brewery in Duisberg.

After this stop we headed to the Schillerklaus bar, which sold Bitburger beer on draught and a selection of bottled beers. The bar was adorned with murals and pictures covering the walls, which make it look a little retro. As with the previous bar the landlord was very chatty and the beers were in very good condition.

Heading back to the hotel we stopped at the Brauhaus Mitte for something to eat. It is a large brewpub at the front of a

shopping centre, a strange pub with a traditional entrance but the rear open to the mall. It sold unfiltered beers, Hell, Dunkel and Weiss, which although somewhat hazy, tasted quite nice.

On Saturday morning we had an early start, with breakfast booked in the terrace restaurant of the Reichstag Building designed by Sir Norman Foster. The breakfast was fantastic with a selection of Bavarian, Continental, or omelettes with a mixture of fillings. Coupled with the temperature, which was creeping into the low 30s Centigrade, this made for an excellent start to the day. After breakfast we took in the city views of Berlin from the glass dome on the building's flat roof and then made the decision to follow the river back to our hotel via the market, taking in a few hostelryes on the way. First stop was the Die Berliner Republik

bar, right next to the river Spree and opposite Friedrichstraße train station. This bar had a good selection of local draught and bottled beers including the ubiquitous Pauliner wheat beer.

Moving on we next stopped at the Aufsturz bar, which again advertised 100 beers from around Europe – in particular, Austria and Switzerland. This bar was well furnished although that did not extend to the bench seats outside. We then had a slow cultural tour of the area, which included the Jewish Synagogue, on our way to the Schwarzwaldstuben bar which not only served wines and beer but also a varied selection of good hearty food. As with the other bars the range of beers tended to be the local Berliner Pils, a couple of Dunkel beers, and a selection of the wheat beers which seem to be very popular. This bar is very well fitted out with simple wooden



PICTURES FROM FAR LEFT: The leafy exterior of Tucholsky; a section of the Berlin wall; some of the group while away the night at Zum Nusbaum; the oddly-shaped Sophiencorner

Pictures by the authors, plus Cameron Shiell and Matt Bullock

chairs and tables and with nice friendly staff, all in all a pleasant experience.

Our next stop was the Tucholsky restaurant and bar, where we enjoyed our beer and a snack in the sunshine of the garden. This hostelry is rather nice looking, with the building covered in greenery, making it stand out against the surrounding buildings.

Moving on we headed up to the Sophiencorner bar which turned out to be rather quirky, with tiled floors and oak furniture on a triangular plot. The beers on offer here were the usual local beers and bottled wheat beers. The decision was taken to head for the market area not far from our hotel and get another beer and some food, whilst listening to the local oompah band and soaking up the sights. We eventually managed to find a little bar and restaurant under

the main railway line where most of the arches have been converted into bars, shops and restaurants. We had a lovely meal and time to reflect on the day's travels and, more importantly, what we planned to do in the evening. The decision was taken to stay out and enjoy the sights and a few more hostelries, as this was our last night in the city.

On the way out of the market area we happened upon a micro-brewery and bar, the Gasthaus Brauerei (Marcus Brau). This turned out to be a rather nice little bar with its own brewery at the rear, and a couple of very interesting beers were on offer. We eventually ended up at the Hofbräu Berlin Restaurant and beer hall near our hotel in the early evening. This bar was very impressive and could easily hold a couple of hundred people. When we arrived the local band had just

started playing, great fun to join in singing with. There was a good selection of beers on offer, the most popular being the HB pilsner and an excellent Dunkel. After a rather hot and hectic day some of us decided to call it a day while the night owls moved on to other places until the early hours.

Berlin has a lot to offer the discerning traveller. The rejuvenation of the old East Berlin is quite breathtaking, considering the timescale in which it has been undertaken -- and they have not yet finished. There is a vast selection of cafés and bars, but although the beer tended to be in good order it became somewhat samey, and there are better offerings in other parts of Germany. The prices of meals and drinks are similar to in London or other major European cities.

Where will we go next year?

Pub News

Abingdon

OLD ANCHOR: Is now selling six real ales, with Morland Original and Old Speckled Hen being the permanent offerings plus four rotating guest beers. It also gives CAMRA card-carrying members a discount.

SPREAD EAGLE: A Greene King house on Northcourt Road, the Spread has been selling an own-branded beer called Where Eagles Dare.



WHITE HORSE: It expected that this pub on Ock Street will have new managers by the end of September as the present incumbents of this pub are moving on as tenants to the Coach & Horses in Kingston Bagpuize.

Please send your pub and brewery news to:
pub-news@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Charlton-on-Otmoor

CROWN: A community buy-out has also failed for this pub, but it looks set to continue as a pub to the relief of local residents. An online statement by the Friends of the Crown Co-operative Committee states: "It is with disappointment that I am writing to let all interested parties know that despite our best efforts Osprey (Admiral Taverns) have agreed terms with a third party to lease the pub for 6 months with a view to purchase.

The Management Committee has met with the new landlords and I am pleased to say they intend to continue running The Crown as a pub and seem genuine in this regard. Max is a chef, so his intention is to serve food at the pub and Louise his partner will run the front of house. The Crown will close on the 11th of September for refurbishment, and Max and Louise hope to re-open in the first week of October depending on how work progresses.

Max and Louise have asked me to assure the community they wish to work with us to build a long standing business that serves the best interest of the community, and look forward to meeting everyone in The Crown when it re-opens. With this in mind, the consensus of the Management Committee is to allow Max and Louise the opportunity to make The Crown work as a viable business, but to ask all interested parties to allow us to keep the pledges we have on record for the six month period, in case of a change in circumstances."

Oxford

ANCHOR, HAYFIELD ROAD:

Reopening of this Wadworths house in north Oxford was still awaited at the time of writing. It has been acquired by Duke Bars, which runs the Duke of Cambridge cocktail bar in Little Clarendon Street, which aims to re-establish it as a gastro-pub.

CHESTER ARMS: The new owners of the former Chester Arms, on Chester Street off Iffley Road, have exciting plans to turn it into the hub of its community. It is due to re-open in mid-November as a free house, and is run by businessmen including Drew Brammer, who runs the Oxford restaurant. "We have some pretty exciting ale plans, from a community ale created by the local residents with a percentage of each pint bought going back into the community, to the alphabetical pump and also some beer and food matching through beer snacks from around the world," he says. "It will be a pub, corner shop, cafe and village hall serving lunch, tea, coffee and cake during the day, and dinner and drinks in the evening." It even plans to create its own micro-brewery with the help of Compass, usually five Fullers and Gales ales on tap including the old favourites London Pride, Seafarers and Discovery, plus regularly changing seasonal and guest ales. A menu of home cooked, locally sourced pub favourites is offered at reasonable prices, with a good selection of wines, Fairtrade coffee, a pretty courtyard garden, and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Complimentary dog biscuits for canine customers complete the picture.



FAIRVIEW: Situated on the Lye Valley housing estate in Headington, this pub is back on sale by Enterprise Inns after the failure of a community bid to acquire it. In the meantime it continues to trade. It was listed as a community asset by the city council in July, but residents were unable to raise enough money to put in a bid. Closure and redevelopment is now a possibility for an unchanged 1950s pub featuring in CAMRA's National Inventory of pub interiors.

HEAD OF THE RIVER: We are sad to record the death of a popular Oxford landlord, Stuart Scott, at the age of just 47. Stuart was born in Wheatley, and began his career in the pub trade at the King and Queen. He trained as a chef, working at Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons for Raymond Blanc, before returning to the pub trade as chef at the Head of the River in Oxford. More recently, Stuart ran the Bear, before moving back to the Head of the River as licensee couple of years ago.

Stuart was a larger than life character, and we had the pleasure of his company at our Beer Festival LocAle tasting session just a couple of years ago. He died of a brain haemorrhage at the end of August. We send our condolences to his wife Nicki and son Dylan.

HOLLY BUSH: One of the last remaining pubs in west Oxford has closed. The pub in Bridge Street, Osney Island, has been put up for sale by Greene King and may continue as a pub or be bought by developers. It is close to the Osney Arms, which is being converted into a guest house.

JACOB'S INN: The former Red Lion in Wolvercote duly re-opened under its new name in August. It has been leased from Marston's by the owners of the Jacobs & Field deli in Headington, and has become a gastro-pub with its own pigs and chickens.

QUARRY GATE: The latest pub to close is this hostelry in Headington, which is again part of a trend of pub closures in the area with the Crown & Thistle likely to be turned into housing. It is a free house and former Courage pub which is likely to be missed by local residents if it fails to find a buyer to keep it going.

Stanton St. John



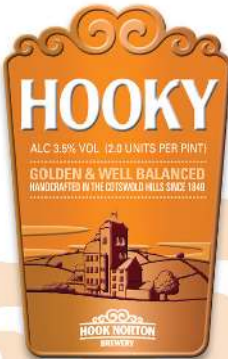
STAR: The pub remained closed at the time of writing but is expected to re-open before long. The Wadworths pub has featured in previous editions of the Good Beer Guide.

Brewery News

AYLESBURY: Aylesbury Brewhouse will be travelling the beer world, reading George Orwell and exorcising demons with its new limited edition beers. First on the map is a golden German 4.2% pilsner-style ale, In Ernst, named after German surrealist painter Max Ernst and brewed with German malt and hops. Then it's across to Russia for Red Star, a deep red 3.6% ale that uses Russian hops to give it a hoppy punch. Then, finally, it's over the Pacific Ocean to the US to find the American Dream, which will be over the top in every way – very malty, very bitter, and very hoppy!

With All Hallows' Eve just round the corner it was only fair for Aylesbury Brewhouse to get in on the act, but don't be afraid of what it will be brewing! Named in honour of one of the scariest films of all time, Captain Howdy will be helping to exorcise your demons with a 4% beer that is as dark as it gets. Not all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others, and Napoleon's Farm falls into the latter category. It's a 3.8% pale bitter, brewed without the assistance of animals, with seemingly pleasant aromas but a surprisingly bitter aftertaste.

BUBBLE: Tony Reilly is setting up a small pilot venture, the Bubble Brewery, in Oxford to produce traditional cask ales. He is looking for pubs in Oxfordshire willing to try a sample cask - call Tony on 01865 747616.



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Brewing a birthday beer

Adrian Bolton, aged 49¾, has a day to remember at Gun Dog Brewery



IT'S THE MIDDLE of July, Thursday evening, unseasonably warm, and I'm cleaning my wellie boots and getting excited. I'm off to brew the beer for my 50th birthday party at Gun Dog Ales the next day.

I get to the brewery in Woodford Halse, near Banbury, at 7.15am and James the head brewer is already there with the kettle on. Well actually, not the kettle for a cuppa but the hot liquor vessel. I have to start to learn the brewing terminology, as water is only water if you use it for cleaning, but called liquor if it's going into the beer. This has to be at 72.5°C and is controlled by two big heating elements as it has to heat over 1,100 litres of liquor. So here's another oddity, even for someone my age who was taught at school both metric and imperial: throughout the day we work in litres and grams in order to make barrels, firkins and pints.

For the brew of Jacks Spaniels we are making, number 110, we will need to prepare five full bags of Crystal malt, some torried wheat, for head retention, and some water improvers, as we can't all brew beer in Burton on Trent. In order to stop the malt from forming dry lumps, James takes the hot liquor and wets the malt in the bag, this then running into Mash Tun. Now we start timing, for the 320 litres of liquor now need 60 minutes held at a steady

temperature, to form the bulk of the wort.

All the time James is explaining to me the processes, the pitfalls, and the things he has learnt, sometimes the hard way. We are cleaning, preparing, checking times, monitoring temperatures all the time, and recording it, so it can be checked back. It's about now that we actually do get time for our first cup of tea!

The hops are added twice in the brewing process, once added directly to the boiling wort at this stage and later for a shorter boil at the end just before transferring to the fermenting bins. The hops smell wonderful, even when dry, especially if you rub them in your hands and the aromatic oils warm and fill your nose with that beery aroma. This brew contains four different hops, each measured and added according to the recipe, giving the beer its final flavours including bitterness and citrus in this case.

Whilst the hops are boiling, I offer to empty the Mash tun, and James readily agrees. I soon realise that this is not an easy task with the outside temperature at about 25 degrees C and the five bags of malt still in the tub at +70! The spent grains are fed to local livestock, ensuring the best and greenest use of all the ingredients.

Once boiling is complete, we start the transfer to the fermenting vessels. The boiling wort is passed through a heat exchanger to cool it down, but also to warm the incoming liquor ready for the next brew. A yeast starter is made ready to add to the fermenting vessel. By about five o'clock we are there with the yeast and wort, at the correct temperature, all covered and ready to start the next stage. After three or four days it will have finished fermenting, when it will be chilled and racked and finally stored until I go to claim my barrel!

So on my day's holiday from the normal 9 to 5, I do a straight ten hours on my feet. I go home very happy, smelling like a brewery and surprisingly not having touched a drop all day. Most importantly, I now appreciate the care and effort that goes into making craft beers, and the knowledge that is needed by the likes of James to create these time after time. My thanks to James and Sarah, and the others at Gun Dog Ales, for letting me have this truly great day out. If you ever get the chance to do this just do it, as you learn and appreciate so much more than on a brewery tour! And of course I was able to take a few bottles home whilst waiting to collect my barrel - all in all, a Beerilliant Birthday Present.

ADRIAN BOLTON

Yummy Brummie

Dave Richardson samples the delights of Britain's second city

THE MIDLANDS were a stronghold of real ale even when it was in decline in some other regions, so you would expect Birmingham to have a fine choice. The city centre is very appealing for the ale drinker, and with two trains an hour direct from Oxford and a journey time of about 1hr 15m, it makes an easy day out.

You don't even have to venture far from New Street station, as there are at least three outstanding real ale pubs within five to ten minutes' staggering distance, for that all-important last train home just after 10pm. I usually meet friends at the Shakespeare, a Nicholson's house on Summer Row which is directly in front of the new pedestrian exit from the extensively remodelled station. This proximity may make the Shakespeare even more crowded than beforehand, but it's worth dropping in for at least

one from Nicholson's usually good range and to enjoy the traditional atmosphere.

Eight hand pumps are available, and on this occasion, during one of Nicholson's beer festivals, the range included Okell's, Orkney's Raven Ale, Harviestoun's Old Engine Oil, Downton's American Red, Bath Ales' Summer Hare, Doom Bar and Purity's Pure Ubu. Nicholson's Pale Ale was not available but is usually on. I enjoyed the Raven Ale and made a mental note to return before the train home.

It was now time for a ten-minute stroll to one of at least two pubs in the city centre converted from banks, and what a grand place this is. The Old Joint Stock on Temple Row is a regular in the Good Beer Guide and quite possibly the only pub in Britain with its own theatre, with an 80-seat auditorium upstairs. The

Grade II listed building was constructed in the 1860s for the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank, later becoming a branch of Lloyds before opening in 1997 as a Fullers Pie and Ale House. The interior is most impressive with an enormous horseshoe shaped bar, elaborate ceiling with cupola and chandelier, huge picture windows and framed memorabilia.

So what about the beer? The full range of Fullers beers is usually available but it also has several guest beers, which today included Beer Geek Brewery's Great White Geek and Geek Unique, and Warwickshire Beer Company's Shakespeare County which went down a treat. It actually has about 20 hand pumps but many are Fullers and most are duplicated. Well worth a visit.

At this stage of my Birmingham expeditions hunger pangs begin



ABOVE: The Old Contemptibles.

RIGHT: Hajees shows clues to its former identity



to stir, and Birmingham is a fine place to enjoy a curry. I usually head straight for the heart of the action in the so-called Balti Triangle, an area south of the city centre populated mainly by the Muslim community. The number 6 bus takes you along Stratford Road in Sparkhill through a colourful mix of fashion shops and bazaars -- but what about the pubs, I hear you ask?

As Muslims don't drink alcohol most have been converted to other uses, especially curry houses. One of my favourite eating places is Hajee's at 512 Stratford Road, and here the pub heritage is very prominent with the legends Mitchell and Butlers and The Antelope set in stone at first floor level, complete with stone representation of said beast. The sign inside saying Strictly No Alcohol is a bit disconcerting though!

Suitably fortified with a fine authentic curry we were soon back on the number 6 to resume our investigations, this time at the Old Contemptibles on Edmund Street, another Nicholson's house. This is another fine old pub, full of memorabilia of the regiment it is named after, and again had a fine range of summer ales available during Nicholson's beer festival. I tried Acorn's Barnsley Bitter which was a fine pint, then a half of Scullion's Irish Ale. Also on the roster were Broughton's Merlin's Ale, Scottish Border Brewery's Dark Horse, Copper Dragon's Black Gold, plus the ubiquitous Doom Bar and Sharp's less common Cornish Coaster. Nicholson's Pale Ale and IPA completed the real ale list, plus Thatcher's Heritage Cider.

We couldn't delay it any longer, so it was now on to what must be one of the best real ale pubs

in Britain and mother ship of CAMRA Birmingham, the Wellington on Bennetts Hill. This renowned hostelry has a modern interior, but what it lacks in old-fashioned atmosphere, it more than compensates for in the range of beer and the busy, friendly atmosphere. There are 16 hand pumps along the bar with a couple of apologetic lager taps cowering at one end, and each of the hand pumps dispenses an independent brew. With such a range available it is understandable that staff might become confused, so you order by pump number from a display on a computer screen. I won't even attempt to list the beers available here, but the computer screen, when you get used to it, is very helpful. It lists not only the brewery, ale and price, but also the ABV and colour, ranging from A for pale to E for very dark. You could very easily

continued overleaf ►



THE BEAR INN

The Bear Inn is the oldest pub in Oxford and is a hidden gem, just off the hustle and bustle of the busy High Street.

The pub is popular with students, locals and tourists alike, who enjoy a warm welcome, a range of real ales and bottled conditioned beers and traditional, home-cooked food by the fire.

The pub is most famous for its collection of ties - dating back to the early 1900's and representing clubs in the Oxford area and, more recently, around the globe.

A great place to unwind, take off your own tie, and enjoy looking at everyone else's!



6 Alfred Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX1 4EH
Telephone: 01865 728164
Email: bearinn@fullers.co.uk

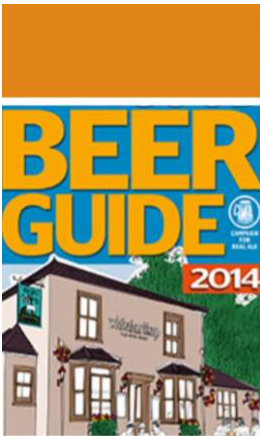


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THE MASONS ARMS



City Pub of the Year 2013 The Finalists

With last year's winner, Far from the Madding Crowd, ineligible this year due to its change of management, there are some new pubs on the 2013 City Pub of the Year shortlist

IT IS time to vote again for the coveted award of Oxford CAMRA City Pub of the Year. All CAMRA members are entitled to vote, and you can do so by picking up a voting form in any of the six pubs, and then visiting all of the six, getting your form stamped as you go along.

Once you have visited all six pubs, and have a full set of six stamps, then you can rank the pubs in order of preference. Votes will be counted at the December branch meeting, and the winner will be announced just before Christmas. We're sure you'll find the judging process enjoyable, so why not

have a go this year?

The six pubs are:

Chequers

131 High Street OX1 4DH

Lamb & Flag

12 St Giles OX1 3JS

Masons Arms

*2 Quarry School Place,
Headington Quarry OX3 8LH*

Prince of Wales

73 Church Way, Iffley OX4 4EF

Rose and Crown

14 North Parade Avenue OX2 6LX

White Hart

*12 St Andrew's Road,
Headington OX3 9DL*

The Judging Criteria

Everybody will have their own way of judging a pub, or scoring one pub against another, but below are the criteria we think you should take into consideration:

Quality of Beer

The fact that the pub has been nominated suggests that it consistently serves excellent real ale, but obviously on your visit, or preferably visits, you can verify this.

Atmosphere, Style & Decor

This is the feel of the pub; ask yourself whether you would want to visit regularly and how comfortable you feel here.

Service & Welcome

Is the service prompt and friendly? What are the other customers like, and did they welcome you? Are the staff knowledgeable about the beers on sale?

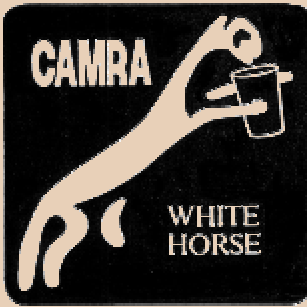
Sympathy with CAMRA Aims

Does the pub promote our values? Not just by stocking the Oxford Drinker, but by actively promoting real ale over other drinks.

Good Value

Not just the price of a pint, but the whole experience feel like good value for money?





White Horse Branch Contact:
Neil Crook
contact@whitehorsecamra.org.uk
www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

Branch Diary

Saturday 19 October

Social at Oxford Beer Festival

Meet at 1pm at the Town Hall. Festival runs from Thursday 17th.

Saturday 26 October

Social at Swindon Beer Festival

Meet at 1pm. Festival runs from Thursday 24th

Friday 15 November to Saturday 16 November

Wantage Beer & Cider Festival

Civic Centre, Wantage
See page 22 for more details.

Friday 13 December Christmas Pub Social

Wantage
Meet at 6pm at the Royal Oak and
from 8pm at the Shoulder of Mutton.

Up hill and down ale

Dick Bosley reports on a Cotswold
pub walk

OUR “hard core four” of John Tim, Jane and I made a last minute decision to walk the Cotswold Way rather than the Oxfordshire one, owing to a lack of accommodation near Charlbury. Rarely can circumstances have been so serendipitous. John decided to join us despite a bad back – fortunately this hurt most when he laughed, a situation very unlikely to happen on our walks.

The train journey to Stonehouse gave us a chance to look at maps and guide books, but didn't prepare us for the hills we would be climbing. Equally, our last couple of long walks (footpaths along the Thames and the Kennet & Avon Canal) were not notable for their ascents. This meant that after an hour or so of walking vaguely southish we had to face our first vertiginous hill, but the views when we reached the top were good enough to take away what little breath we had left.

After a few more miles and hills

it dawned on us that we were not passing through any villages, and so we detoured off the path to go to the lovely named Nymphsfield to visit the Rose & Crown. Arriving at 14.32 we found that food service ended at 14.30, but they were kind enough to do some chips for us. These were accompanied by excellent pints of Cotswold Spring Stunner, and Stroud from the eponymous brewery. We were also able to pick up a copy of the local CAMRA magazine – The Tippler – which helpfully listed all the pubs serving Local Ale and so we were able to plan our stops on the following day.

Suitably refreshed we returned to the path and continued on our way, passing through many beech woods and enjoying more spectacular views across the Severn Valley. Despite my pleas none of the others would allow further detours, and so there were no more stops until we reached the Old Spot in Dursley. Having heard many



tales of this venerable pub and having shared many pints with the more venerable previous landlord, Rick Sainty, my hopes were high and I was in no way disappointed. The Hop Monster from Coastal Brewery and Nottingham Crusader made a lovely accompaniment to wandering around this ex-CAMRA Pub of the Year, looking at the old photos and brewery memorabilia.

After a quick(ish) walk up a final hill to the B & B we were given a lift back down the town (by the B & B owners) for food and a return visit to the Old Spot, this time trying the Cotleigh Otter and Uley Old Spot... I wonder where they got that name from?

After a hearty breakfast we resumed our walk, still able to appreciate some of the best countryside I have ever walked through. Another detour was needed off the path to get to the Fleece at Hillesley for a latish lunch. This is a "community" pub, and hats off to the locals

for saving this great inn. The food was good and all of the beers were better. Between us we sampled the last of the Stroud Budding, the first couple of the Butcombe Matthew, as well as the GWB Maiden Voyage and the Butcombe Bitter.

We hadn't quite got back onto the Cotswold Way before we were forced into the Beaufort Arms in Hawkesbury – and we nearly missed that... this is a pub not to be missed. There is more old brewery stuff than we saw at the Old Spot the previous day, and the Bath Spa and two from the Bristol brewery – No 7 and a different Stunner – were all more than quaffable.

A final stretch of the legs saw us reach the Dog Inn at Old Sodbury, where we had a chance to sample Wickwar's Bob and Old Dog before getting a lift home.

DICK BOSLEY

Royal Oak wins again

The Royal Oak, Wantage has again been confirmed as CAMRA's 2013 Central Southern Cider Pub of the Year. The Oak now goes forward with the other 10 regional winners to contest the National Cider Pub of the Year award, which the Oak won last year.

Festival success

Congratulations to Dale and Julia at the Black Horse at East Hanney for another successful 'HanneyFest' over the August bank holiday weekend. A weather forecast that would have deterred Noah meant that the turn-out early in the day was a bit lower than last year, but as the sunshine held people started arriving in numbers to sample the seven guest ales, which were supplementing the three regulars. The Wild Mule from Roosters was excellent as was the Caesar Augustus from William Bros, the latter being a lager/IPA hybrid. But for me, the top beer was Festival from the excellent Dark Star brewery.

Baggy Trousers

Shrivenham C of E Primary School celebrated its 150th anniversary in September, when children and staff came to school in Victorian dress and the assembly was led by the Bishop of Reading. To mark the occasion the Hop Kettle brewery in Cricklade produced a special beer in bottles and casks for local pubs, and at 4.3% ABV 'Baggy Trousers' was well received by parents and locals.



6th WANTAGE BEER FESTIVAL

WANTAGE CIVIC HALL
Portway, Wantage OX12 9BY

Fri 15th & Sat 16th November 2013

Opening Times: Friday 11.00am - 11.00pm

Saturday 11.00am - 11.00pm

28 Real Ales

**Beers from throughout the country
Cider & Perry**

Glass hire £2.00

Festival glasses available

Food and soft drinks served

Admission prices:

Friday 11am - 6pm: CAMRA members Free, Others £2.00

Friday 6pm - 11pm: CAMRA members £1.00, Others £3.00

Saturday 11am - 11pm: CAMRA members Free, Others £2.00

(Under 21's need ID)

Parking at Venue

Further details: <http://www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk>

Festival Diary

Further details of festivals in the area can be found on the Oxford CAMRA website www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/festivals.php

Friday 11 to

Monday 14 October

October Fest

The Cherry Tree, High Street,
Steventon, nr Abingdon
01235 831222
20 beers & ciders
www.cherrytreesteventon.co.uk

Saturday 12 to

Friday 18 October

St Aldate's Tavern October
Beer Festival

St Aldate's Tavern, St Aldate's,
Oxford
01865 241185
staldatestavernoxford.com

Wednesday 16 to

Saturday 19 October

Concrete Pint Beer Festival

Buszy, opp. Milton Keynes
Central rail station, Elder Gate,
Central Milton Keynes
90 beers plus 25 ciders & perries
www.mkcamra.org.uk

Wednesday 16 to

Thursday 31 October

Wetherspoon Real Ale
Festival

All JD Wetherspoon pubs & Lloyds
No1 bars
www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

Thursday 17 to

Saturday 19 October

Oxford Beer & Cider
Festival

Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates,
Oxford
150 beers plus 50 ciders &
perries
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk



Saturday 19 to

Tuesday 22 October

Autumn Cider Festival

Far From the Madding Crowd
Friars Entry, Oxford
01865 240900
www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

Friday 18 to

Saturday 19 October

Aylesbury Vale Beer
Festival

Bucks County Council Sports &
Social Club, Lower Road, Stoke
Mandeville
www.aylesburybeerfestival.org.uk

Thursday 24 to

Saturday 26 October

Swindon Beer Festival

STEAM Museum, Kemble Drive,
Swindon
www.swindoncamra.org.uk

Wednesday 30 October
to Saturday 2 November

Birmingham Beer festival
Second City Suite, Sherlock
Street, Birmingham
250+ beers, 80+ ciders & perries
www.birminghambeerfestival.org.uk

Friday 15 to

Saturday 16 November

Wantage Beer Festival
Wantage Civic Hall, Portway,
Wantage

28 beers plus cider & perry
See advert opposite.
www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

Thursday 28 to

Saturday 30 November

Dudley Winter Ales Fayre
Dudley Town Hall, St James's
Road, Dudley
www.dudleycamra.org.uk

Tuesday 10 to

Saturday 14 December

Winter Beer Festival

Far from the Madding Crowd,
Friars Entry, Oxford
01865 240900
www.maddingcrowd.co.uk

Saturday 14 December

Haddenham Winterfest

Village Hall Complex, Banks
Road, Haddenham
24 beers plus cider; 12 noon
until 5pm only
haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk

To get your beer festival listed
here send details to:
festivals@oxfordcamra.org.uk



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Beer Festival Reports

Cricketers, Littleworth

With between (depending upon how you look at it) three and five new local breweries, including a special brew for the festival by myself and a host of ales from familiar brewers, customers were looking forward to wetting their palates.

Starting with lowest gravity ales first, there was Vale's Brill Gold (3.5%ABV), hoping to show the same form as Brill Amber which was the joint winner at the February festival earlier in the year. Next was sister brewery Aylesbury Brewhouse's "Ikuru Mizu" (3.6%ABV), a Japanese inspired ale made with some rice and Japanese hops.

My ale Littleworth Session (3.8%ABV) was described in the tasting notes thus: "Stuart is a publican, not a brewer, and has very little in the way of refinement. He wanted something that tasted a bit like Hooky, looked the colour of John Smith's, that he could drink a lot of in Littleworth, hence the name. Goes well with sausage." That raised a few eyebrows.

Next came new boys Whale Ale's Pale Whale (3.8%ABV), Gun Dog Jacks Spaniels (3.8%ABV), new Great Missenden Malt Brewery's Dark (3.9%ABV) and Golden ales (3.9%ABV), Whale Ale Ruby Moby (4%ABV). Then there were lager brewery Cotswold Brewing Company's first cask offering Cotswold Cask (4%ABV), Tring Rocket Man (4.3%ABV), Meow from XT's experimental arm Animal Brew Co (4.5%ABV),

Isambard's Steam'd Up (4.5%ABV) from West Berkshire Brewery and new brewery Siren Craft Brew's Undercurrent (4.6%ABV). The collection was completed with some heavy hitting 5%ABV+ IPAs: Loose Cannon's IPA Trial 3 at 5.3%ABV, Hook Norton's Flagship (5.4%ABV) and the other joint February Festival winner: XT5 (5.5%ABV). That's 16 ales in all, plus five ciders from Tutts Clump ranging in strength from 5%ABV to 7.5%ABV, and Tutts Clump Perry at 6%ABV.

The first ale to sell out – somewhat predictably – was my Littleworth Session, which only lasted until Saturday lunchtime. Aylesbury Brewhouse's Ikuru Mizu was next to finish, followed by Gun Dog's Jacks Spaniels. The Tutts Clump ciders and perry also took a hammering with only two of the six remaining for Sunday.

The Beer of the Festival title was, for the first time in Beer and Sausage Festival history, retained by XT5, on a very high average of 8.6/10 (in February it managed 7.8/10). For the record, my ale received a credible rating of 6.8/10.

STUART BULL

Masons Arms, Headington Quarry

The Mason's Arms celebrated its 12th year of organising festivals in September with a great line-up of 45 beers and 13 ciders. Over 700 people turned up over the weekend from as far away as Kent and Hampshire to sample brews including the CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain,

Eland 1872 Porter (6.5%ABV), and of course the produce of the Mason's own Old Bog micro-brewery in the pub garden. Landlord Chris Meeson said he was very pleased with the range available and the turn-out, and if you missed the festival you can always be assured of a good range in the pub. Regular brews here include Harviestown Bitter and Twisted, West Berkshire Good Old Boy, Rebellion Mutiny and Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge.



ABOVE: Chris Meeson mans the cider bar at the Mason's Arms

Stonesfield Septemberfest

This new event was held in the village hall on a Saturday at the end of September. There were 23 well-chosen beers, including a festival special from XT, *Slate yer Thirst* (3.8%). Other beer highlights included another XT beer, *Fresh Hop 1*, and the tasty *Amarillo* from Bury-based Brightside Brewing Company.

Four ciders, a good range of food, and a comprehensive and varied programme of live music made this a fantastic event, enjoyed by over 1000 people.

Town and Country Pub of the Year 2014

Six great finalists

Voting for Oxford CAMRA's annual award for pubs outside the city has now finished. Whoever wins the town and country award, all six finalists are well worth a visit – as **Dave Richardson** discovers

Abingdon - Brewery Tap

The current award holder will be difficult to dislodge, and it is easy to see why as soon as you enter this welcoming pub on Ock Street close to the site of the long closed Morlands brewery - hence its name. As landlord Matthew Heritage explained in the last edition, the Brewery Tap is a Greene King tied tenancy which has negotiated a deal allowing it to sell a much wider range of real ale than is normally the case with Greene King.

On offer during a recent visit were three ales sourced independently, XT4 from Thame, St Austell's Trelawny, and the most local brew of all, Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge. In addition were beers supplied by GK, its own Morlands Original plus York Brewery's Guzzler and Thwaites' Nutty Black.

"We pay additional rent so we can stock more beers, and we come across as a free house as this is what people love," explains Matthew. "Anyone can make a free house appeal to a CAMRA member but I have proved you can also do it with a tenancy. There is no Greene King branding here."

The hanging baskets, flagged floor, wood panelling, garden and fresh, inventive menu all combine to make a very agreeable experience. Beer festivals are held at least twice a year and Sunday live music is from 5pm to 7pm. There's even a "heritage" jukebox!
*40-42 Ock Street, Abingdon,
OX14 5BZ. 01235 521655*



Abingdon - Nags Head

This pub, right on the historic river bridge, has had a remarkable turn-around from a virtually derelict shell just over a year ago to a Good Beer Guide listing for 2014, an accolade it achieved only 10 months after reopening in November 2012.

The new owner of this free house is Dushan Sawathura,

known as Dusty, who was previously landlord of the Broad Face pub just a few hundred yards away, which is now promoted as a gastropub. Dusty has a bit of a reputation for turning around ailing pubs, and at the Nag's Head he offers a persuasive combination of modern British cuisine, served in a low-level dining room overlooking the Thames, and real ale.

It proudly advertises eight real ales and most of these are either from Oxfordshire or from not far beyond its borders. On my last visit it had four regulars and four guests, the regulars being Loose Cannon's Abingdon Bridge (highly appropriate!), Hook Norton's Hooky, Loddon's Ferryman's Gold and the exception to the local approach, Sharp's Doom Bar from Cornwall. Guests from a long list of rotating beers were Plain Ales from near Salisbury, Raw Brewery's Dark Peak Stout and two from the Marston's range, EPA and Oxford Gold. Over 35 breweries have already supplied the Nag's Head, which sells about 2,500 pints of real ale (plus 2,000 pints of lager) a week. So how did all this happen, when the pub was closed for two years and written off by most locals?

"I turned around the Broad Face and felt secure there, but this

place was boarded up and in such a good location," says Dusty. "It was a big challenge and I was putting my neck and other parts of my anatomy on the line. But I seem to have the right touch, and I didn't want to carry on running a tenancy where they put the rent up as soon as you do well. Punch Taverns invited me to make a bid and it was a risk worth taking."

Around £750,000 has already been spent upgrading the pub, parts of which date from the 17th century, in addition to the purchase price. It now has a bright, modern feel with a restaurant on the lower level and a large yet intimate bar where you come in from the bridge, plus a large garden jutting out into the river which has its own bar and servery in the summer, when the pub can serve 2,000 meals a week. Live music is staged three times a week and two or three beer festivals are planned, including over the first weekend in November.

I pointed out that Dusty - who has been a chef since he was 16 and cooked in nine countries - could have created a gastropub with a view without such a focus on real ale. But real ale is central to his project, and he thanks Abingdon CAMRA members for their advice and support, rewarding them with a 30p per pint discount.

"Real ale is part of British culture, and I try every beer I sell," he responds. "I have been in the UK for only a short time but I have learned a lot about settling beer, presenting it and, most importantly, selling it at the right price. In the first 10 months we have done better than

expected but I have very dedicated staff."

Dusty (pictured below) has made a long journey from his native Sri Lanka to Abingdon, via a long stay in Finland, but it would appear that he could yet expand. "I have one of the best pubs in the county here but I still want to improve it," he says. "I would also like to do something similar somewhere else. Lots of pubs are coming on the market over the next 12 months."

The Bridge, Abingdon, OX14 3HX. 01235 524516



Bampton - Morris Clown

You wouldn't expect to find lovingly painted murals of French scenes in a small country town in Oxfordshire, but nor would you expect to find a pub that doesn't serve food and opens only in the evenings on weekdays still making a reasonable living. But traditional atmosphere, despite the murals, is very much the strong point of the Morris Clown, and why CAMRA members from Oxford and other towns are happy to trek out to Bampton (number 18 bus from Oxford, number 19

from Witney) to see what it's all about.

This is a free house with two local beers as regulars, White Horse bitter, and Good Old Boy from West Berkshire Brewery. The guest beer during my visit was Cottage Brewing's Duchess, named not after a lady but a rather fine locomotive. Real ciders are also available including Weston's Still Cider and Traditional Scrumpy, and Thatcher's Gold.

Landlord Steve Mace (below) has been here for 22 years, having taken it over from his father who ran the pub as a Courage tenancy. His ex-stepmother loved France and that's where the murals come from. Another reason to visit Bampton is that some of the town scenes from Downton Abbey are filmed there, and some of the locals work as extras. I will look out in case I see Steve on the small screen, and I will look forward to a repeat visit to one of the most traditional and least pretentious pubs I have discovered in a long time. Salut!

High Street, Bampton, OX18 2JW. 01993 850217



Littleworth - Cricketers Arms



It isn't the easiest place to reach, but this free house in the village of Littleworth, near Wheatley, is well worth a visit. Opening of its own micro-brewery behind the pub in the autumn of this year has further added to its charms, with expertise supplied by Compass. A special ale was brewed for its beer and sausage festival in September, and hopefully we can now look forward to regular home-brewed beers.

Landlords Stuart and Angie Bull run a very traditional pub, having rescued it from likely closure six years ago, and it is a recent winner of our Pub of the Year award. They have been rewarded with listing in the Good Beer Guide and LocAle accreditation, and the Cricketers runs monthly themed food nights and Fish and Chips Fridays. Beer on offer during my visit was all local – Shotover's Trinity, Hook Norton's Hooky and West Berkshire's Swift Pale Ale, plus Tutts Clump cider. More ciders were available in the cellar including Oldbury, Five Counties, Royal Berkshire and Rum Cask, so cider lovers should certainly put this on their itineraries.

Buses 103 and 104 will get you there from Oxford, and it isn't far from the regular 280 bus

route between Oxford, Wheatley and Aylesbury.
Littleworth, Wheatley, OX33
1TR. 01865 872738

Witney - Eagle Tavern



Not to be confused with the Eagle Vaults around the corner in Market Square, the Eagle Tavern in Corn Street is a Hook Norton house in the town centre which is a fine showcase for that brewery and also serves a guest beer, which was Wychwood's Hobgoblin when I visited, from Witney's own brewery. Hooky, Old Hooky and Lion were all available and obviously popular with the locals, with Henry Weston's Country Perry also on pump.

A past winner of our Pub of the Year award, the Eagle has stood the test of time while two other pubs on the same street have closed in the last year. It is a fairly large pub with lots of dark wood and a traditional atmosphere, and attracts a mixed clientele including night owls who appreciate it opening until 2am on Fridays and Saturdays.

22 Corn Street, Witney, OX28
6BL. 01993 700121

Witney - New Inn



A little further out of town than the Eagle Tavern but with a strong following among locals, the New Inn is a good example of a Punch Taverns-owned pub that tries hard to attract real ale drinkers. Six hand pumps are available and with the exception of Doom Bar, all those available on my visit were from independent brewers. Cottage Brewery had supplied Winston Churchill Ale, Thwaites had supplied Wainwright, Black Sheep its Best Bitter, Plain Ales Inn the Sun, and Tring Brewery its wonderfully named Side Pocket for a Toad.

This stone-built pub has a large L-shaped lounge, dartboard, and wide selection of books including encyclopaedias. Landlord Martin Cornish (pictured above) celebrates 10 years in charge in December, and aims to continue supplying a range of ales from the Society of Independent Brewers, and organising occasional beer festivals.

111 Corn Street, Witney, OX28
6AU. 01993 703807

Whither Wetherspoon?

BY THE time this issue arrives in Abingdon pubs, a huge new competitor will have opened in their midst. Wetherspoon was due to open The Narrows on 8 October in the former Post Office building on the High Street, the latest in a chain of almost 900 pubs nationwide which is expanding at the rate of about 30 a year.

Real ale lovers sometimes have a "love it or hate it" approach to Wetherspoon. We love it because it sells a wide range of low-priced real ales from brewers we might never sample otherwise, and also because CAMRA members get 50p discount vouchers when joining or renewing their membership. But there is also a very real fear that it could drive other pubs out of business, as the average pub cannot compete on price.

It seems to be common sense that you cannot open an enormous new pub in a small town like Abingdon without having a knock-on effect not only on existing pubs, but also cafes and restaurants. The new Wetherspoon in Abingdon is typically enormous, and as one landlord pointed out, almost as big as several town centre pubs put together.

It may be folly to try and compete with Wetherspoon, but that certainly isn't the case in the border city of Carlisle which I visited recently. Here there are actually two Wetherspoon pubs on the same street, and although one is branded as a

Lloyds No.1 Bar, I'm really not sure what the difference is apart from some music in the latter. Both have the same wide range of low-priced drinks and the same good value menu, and all along the street a discount war is ranging with one pub offering a free curry with any alcoholic drink.

And make no mistake, prices really are low. Real ales typically cost £1.99-£2.49 a pint, which if replicated in Abingdon is a full £1 less than average. Many meals have a pint or other drink included from under £7, or two meals for under £7. Fish and chips with a pint cost £5.99, which is 1p less than my fish and chip shop charges without the pint. A full English breakfast (yes, they open early) costs £3.19.

But other pubs shouldn't consider hanging up their towels for good, as there is some evidence that Wetherspoon can actually be good for them. It will force good pubs to get better, but pubs that were failing anyway may be pushed over the edge. Wetherspoon opened The Company of Weavers in Witney last year, but the two local pubs shortlisted for our branch's Town and Country Pub of the Year aren't complaining. However, Wetherspoon has been cited as a factor in the closure of Witney's only nightclub, Izis.

Martin Cornish, landlord of the New Inn, says: "Wetherspoon

has brought in people who wouldn't otherwise visit Witney. When people ask their staff where else to go for real ale, they are sent on here. Their early evening and late evening clientele are very different, and include people we would not appeal to. Business rates are more of a problem than Wetherspoon."

Annette Hegerty, who runs the Eagle Tavern with partner Ian Payne, adds: "The Chequers and the Butchers Arms have closed in Witney over the last year, and the loss of Izis is a real shame. Wetherspoon has had an effect on pubs on the outskirts as more people come into town, but if Witney becomes better known for real ale, that's good for us."

Dushan Salwathura, owner of the Nag's Head in Abingdon, is not afraid of new competition. "Wetherspoon is a good thing as it will bring new people into the town," he says. "It's a different type of operation and won't affect what we do, but it could affect a couple of pubs which are having problems already. It might even help the not very good pubs to step up a bit."

Whatever you think about a pub chain heading towards 1,000 premises, it's a great place to try real ale and a great cheerleader for the real ale cause. We will watch The Narrows with interest.

DAVE RICHARDSON



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Last orders.....

Oxford CAMRA is on the verge of getting a new website, so please bear with us whilst we get this up and running. Once complete, you'll be able to read the Oxford Drinker on line, as well as keeping abreast of what's going on in our region.

CAMRA's pub database, WhatPub, has gone live to the public this month. Branches have uploaded details of all of the pubs in the UK, so you can search for pubs and find one to suit. Go to WhatPub.com and see for yourselves.

The branch held its AGM in September. Matt Bullock stood down as chairman, to be replaced by Tony Goulding, who is no stranger to the role. Steve Lawrence remains as

secretary, whilst Chris Chris-Moore has taken over as Treasurer. The branch is still seeking a Social Secretary and a Young Members contact, so if you fancy either of those jobs, do get in touch.

For those wondering, the title of our Berlin piece has been taken from a line from the Leonard Cohen song *First We Take Manhattan*. Except with Oxford instead of Manhattan. Or so I'm told.

And for anyone wondering about the photograph on page 3, it shows part of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, by architect Peter Eisenman. There are 2711 concrete slabs on the 4.5 acre site, and if you're in Berlin, it's a must see.



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Keeping in touch with Oxford Branch:

Get all the latest news and events, and share information about what's happening in your area. Sign up to our e-mail list at:

www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists

To receive copies of the *Oxford Drinker* by post, please send A5 sized, self addressed envelopes with postage to cover 100g letter to: **Oxford Drinker, 55 Gainsborough Green, Abingdon OX14 5JL** and we will send you as many issues as you send envelopes.



We're in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide!

Enjoy locally sourced, seasonal produce; relax overlooking the river with a glass of wine or real ale, or a traditional Sunday roast. Or why not join us for one of our speciality food and entertainment nights?

Monday - Steak Night - 20% off steaks

Tuesday - Jam Session Night – great jazz

Wednesday - Fish 'n' Fizz – free bottle of Prosecco with a 2-course fish meal for 2

Friday - Vinyl and Rock Night - 80s vinyl or a blues and rock band performing live

Sunday - Jazz at the Nag's - live jazz from 4.30pm



1st Anniversary Beer Festival (1-3 Nov)

Enjoy a selection of cask ales, a food menu to complement our ales, live music, a hog roast and a firework bonanza!

30
beers &
ciders



Christmas Party (2 – 24 Dec)



Celebrate Christmas in a beautiful location with friends and family.
£19.75 for 2 courses and £24.75 for 3 courses. Early booking advisable.



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