



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**



# the Oxford Drinker

## Oxford City Pub of the year

**Far From The Madding Crowd** in Friars Entry won Oxford CAMRA's City Pub of the Year Award. It was chosen from a short list of six Oxford pubs by CAMRA members at the December branch meeting.

Most nights the pub is packed, and there is a very positive attitude from staff towards real ale.

The award was presented to managers David Patalong and Lauren McGill on 9th December 2009 by Tony Perry, Oxford CAMRA's chairman. Fittingly there was also a beer festival on, so everyone had a fantastic time. A good crowd of locals and Camra branch members had turned up to see the award being presented and naturally also enjoying the beer.

David Patalong was very happy to win the award and thought it was a great accolade.

He thanked everybody who had supported the pub during the past two years including Charles Eld, who is the owner, and the CAMRA members who voted for his pub. He said: *"I'm amazed that we have won because all the pubs on the short list are great. Maybe one of them will win next year"*.

The short list included **The Masons Arms**, in Headington Quarry; **The Rose and Crown**, in North Parade; **The Royal Blenheim**, in St Ebbe's Street; **The Harcourt Arms**, in Jericho; **The White Horse**, in Broad Street and naturally the winner: **Far from the Madding Crowd**. All the pubs were favourites of different members and the voting was very close. Each and every pub on the list could have won the award.



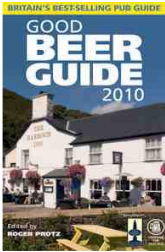
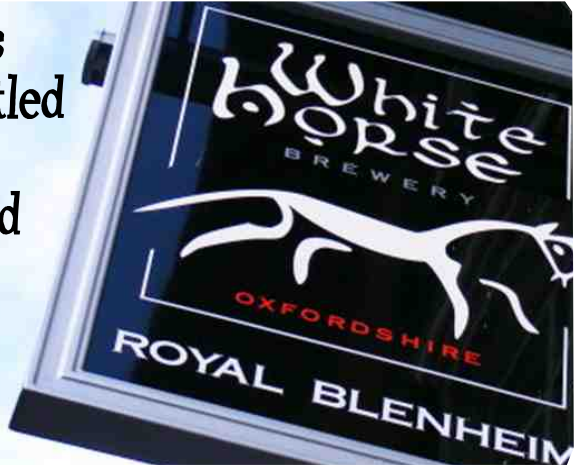
David Patalong & Lauren McGill

Johanne Green

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

3250 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs across the branch area, including Oxford, Abingdon, Witney, Faringdon, Eynsham, Kidlington, Bampton, Wantage.

A PDF is also available online at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker)

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Valuable contributions to this edition have been made by David Hill, Tony Goulding, Tony Perry, John Mackie, Neil Hoggarth, Richard Queralt, et al.

The next publication will be in April 2010.

To advertise contact Johanne Green on 07766-663215, [advertising@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:advertising@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

Send news, information and articles to Steven Green; [editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

Deadline for next issue is 12th March.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Oxford branch or CAMRA limited.  
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## Editorial

Welcome to the Oxford Drinker incorporating the White Horse Drinker.

The Drinker now has new editors, Steven Green and Johanne Green with help from Jon Price and Carly Banner.

We would like to thank Sam French for the work she put in editing this publication over the last few years, and only now by doing it ourselves do we realise just how much work it involved!

We have redesigned the layout a bit and added more colour. We have also joined forces with our neighbouring White Horse branch to add more content and extend our reach to include the Wantage and Faringdon areas. You can find their section starting on page 12. The Oxford branch diary and festival list is now in the centre pages to make them easier to find.

This publication can only be produced with the help of advertisers and we would like to thank everyone who advertised in this edition. We would also like to thank everybody who has contributed with news, articles and ideas.



**The Cricketer's Arms**, Littleworth: In keeping with their focus on local ales and being the first pub in the Oxford area to receive CAMRA's LocAle accreditation, is introducing a large range of local bottled ales to compliment the three local ales that they have on the pumps at all times.

*"We intend to represent all breweries local to Oxford and stock as many of their ales as possible,"* said Stuart Bull, the landlord, *"including any new brews as they become available and any special or celebratory ales."*

The bottled beer selection is available both in the pub and to take-away off-license style with a range of over fifty available.

A beer and sausage festival is planned on 19th-21st February featuring beers from local breweries. Follow Stuart's Blog on [oogyinandle.blogspot.com](http://oogyinandle.blogspot.com) for the full list of beers, call 01865 872738 or look up [www.cricketers-arms.co.uk](http://www.cricketers-arms.co.uk)

**The Railway Inn** in Cullham changed back into a freehouse Pub serving English food in September. Beers currently available are Wychwood Hobgoblin and Wadworth 6X. The landlord, Roy Davidson, also says that as well as going back to being a pub he has 8 rooms for bed and breakfast.

**The Butchers Arms**, Headington (past the shark, first left, first right), has recently been taken over by Richard Davies and his partner Toni Ellam. This Fuller's pub was a popular back street

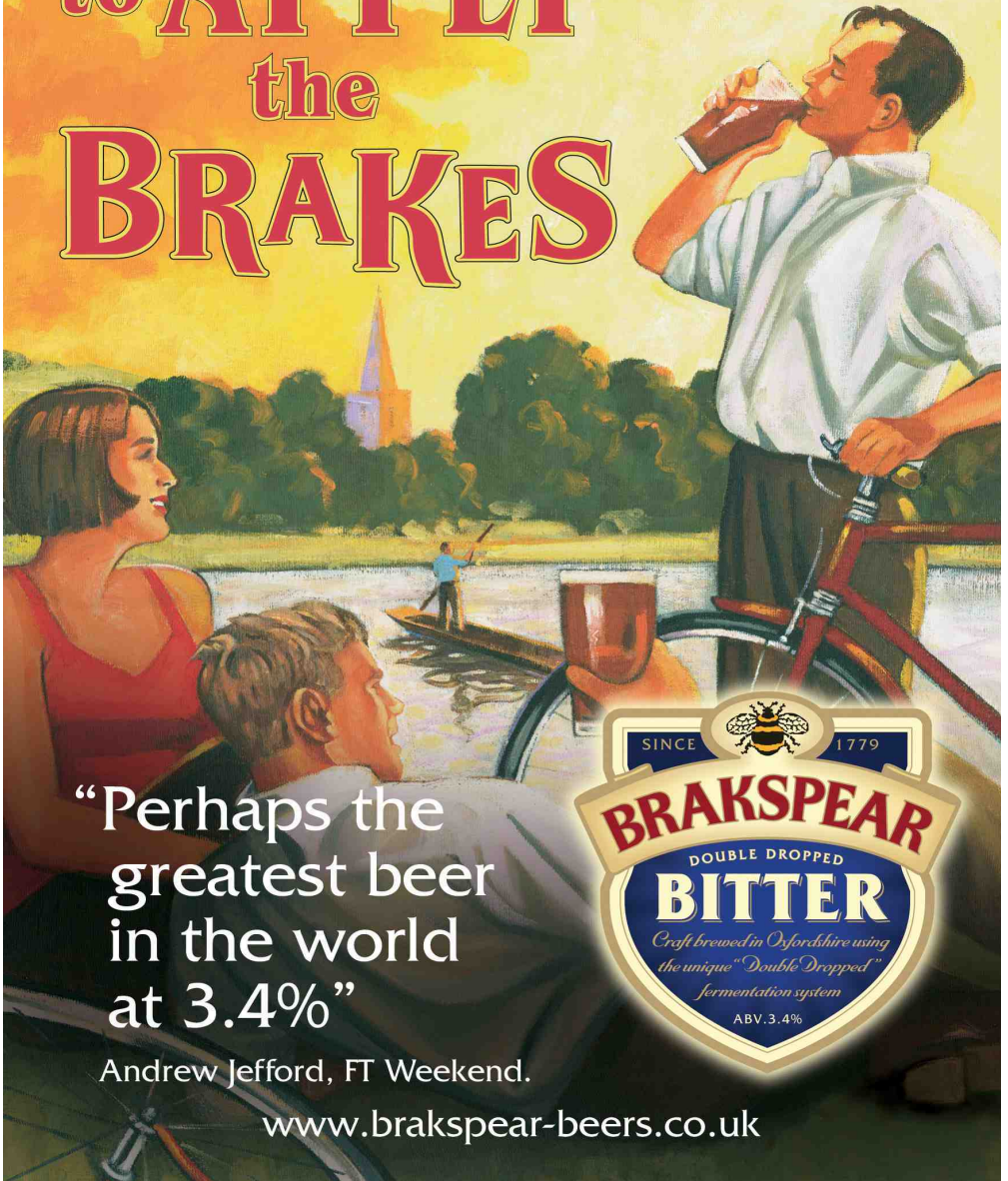
local and one time local CAMRA "Pub of the Year". It has been somewhat languishing in recent years and Richard and Toni are keen to return it to a thriving real ale venue and will be stacking a range of four or five Fuller's draught beers.

**Old Bookbinders**: Matty and Maureen who ran the Greene King owned pub which was our "Pub of the Year" in 2008 and who gave us two real ale festivals a year have left for a well deserved rest, after which they plan to run a pub in Cornwall. Taking over at the Bookies is John Duyck who has previously worked in catering in Oxford and is a CAMRA member. As before John has the right to have a non-Greene King beer and has been regularly serving a West Berkshire ale. Forthcoming beers can be seen on the website at [www.oldbookbinders.co.uk](http://www.oldbookbinders.co.uk). He has also increased the opening hours and the pub is now open throughout the afternoon everyday except Monday and will shortly be serving food at lunchtime and evenings in the week and all day at weekends.

**The Port Mahon** in St Clement's reopened in September last year after being closed for much of the first half of 2009. It has been given a through clean out and redecoration, but retains the same two bar layout inside. The pub is being run by Nick Basset and Joe Hill, as an addition to their existing East Oxford pub - **The Fir Tree** on the Iffley road. It is good to see the Port reopened, and we hope it thrives as the Fir Tree has.



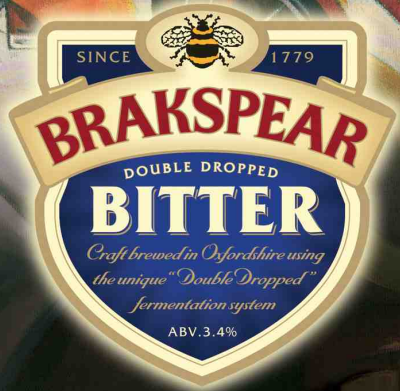
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Andrew Jefford, FT Weekend.

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# Pub News



**The Brewery Tap** in Abingdon has extended its range of beers with a 6th pump. On 4th-6th December a very successful Beer and Sausage Festival was held. Local breweries were well represented and the range of sausages were great with 20 different varieties. Even when not having a beer festival on there is a fine selection of locally brewed beer from Vale Brewery, West Berkshire Brewery and White Horse Brewery amongst others.

**The Magdalen Arms** (corner of Iffley Road and Magdalen Road) shut for an extensive refurbishment in August, and reopened in early November. It has undergone a radical change of direction, going from an emphasis on pool and TV sports to an up-market dining kind of pub. There are still two hand-pumps, which were serving Theakston's Best and XB.

## County Matters



Tony Goulding

As part of the local branch's update of pubs in the area, surveys are carried out by a faithful band on a regular basis by car, bus and foot. Recent visits were made to the west of the county.

The ever popular **Morris Clown** in Bampton (everyone wants this pub as their local), serves Brakspear Bitter along with two ever changing guests which on the night were from West Berks and White Horse. The Clown tends to showcase local micro breweries and must surely be a must for a Locale award .

The Brakspear owned The Five Alls at Filkins has always had a comfortable and friendly feel about the pub, serving good food along with Brakspear Bitter, Oxford Gold and Wychwood guests.

Arriving at **The Bell** at Langford you notice a very pretty building serving very good upmarket food. Drinkers are always welcome with the landlady always ready to listen to guest beer requests.

The beers on the night were Sharps Doom Bar, St Austell Tribute and a good old Locale Hook Norton Old Hooky . There's a good couple of hours drinking here followed by a tasty snack.

**The Plough** at Kelmscot had been closed for near on two years following flood damage. This wonderful old pub is now on its way to former glory. A cautious start has been made with a couple of beers from the local Halfpenny brewery from Lechlade (more LocAle). The food looks good. With a relaxing garden another couple of hours could be spent here as well (Sit here and watch the air show at fairford for nothing). The beers Old Lec and Thames Tickler were in fine form.

The **Clanfield Tavern** in the village of Clanfield has been on the up for the past couple of years and on the night did not disappoint. The Tavern now owned by Marstons serves good quality food in this multi roomed

Continued on page 14

**The Brewery Tap**  
Abingdon



Three beautifully appointed en-suite letting rooms.

**The Brewery Tap's Spring  
'Beer, cider, jazz & blues' festival**  
Friday 26th till Sunday 28th March

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**WHITE HORSE  
WAYLAND'S  
SMITHY  
4.4%**

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GUEST ALES**

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**ABOUT OUR PUB.**

The Tap is open every day with lunch served from noon. Our food is always freshly prepared using the best local ingredients we can find and we are very proud of our daily specials. We are in the 'Good Beer Guide' for the fourth consecutive year and have just been accepted into Greene King's exclusive 'Head Brewers Club'. As well as our love for cask ales, we also have 5 draught lagers, an extensive wine menu and 'bean-to-cup' coffee.

***SUNDAY ROAST IS BACK*** Book now to avoid disappointment



40/42 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 5BZ  
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# Brewery News



## Shotover Brewery Conquers the Snow

Johanne Green

Ed Murray's beer, Prospect - 3.7% ABV. and Scholar - 4.5% ABV can now be sampled at five Oxford pubs: **The Cricketer's Arms** in Littleworth, **The Mason Arms** in Headington Quarry, **The White Horse** on Broad Street, **Far From The Madding Crowd** on Friar's Entry and **The Queen's Head** in Horspath.

Ed managed to deliver nearly all his beer before the recent snow fall in January. Only **The Queen's Head** didn't get their casks before the snow. Luckily the pub is only a stone's throw from the brewery and one cask was man handled



Ed Murray and Denis Walker

there by hand-truck before Ed had to give up and use a 4 wheel drive truck. The beer got there in the end and you can only say that the LocAle criteria is being met here.

## The Masons Arms

2 Quarry School Place Headington Oxford

01865 764579

Oxford CAMRA Pub of the Year 2004 & 2005



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Brewery



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

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Brains Rev James 4.5%  
West Berkshire Good Old Boy 4.0%  
Ever Changing Guest Ales  
Guest Bottled Beers from the UK & around the World  
Over 14 Bottled & Draught Ciders





## Old Bog Celebrates 5th Birthday.

*David Hill*

Following the opening of two new breweries in Oxford, Compass and Shotover, the city's oldest, Old Bog, is celebrating its 5th anniversary having began brewing in February 2005.

The Old Bog brewery is housed in a former gents at the rear of the **Masons Arms** in Headington Quarry, a renowned real ale local and Oxford CAMRA pub of the year in 2004 and 2005. Andy, the brewer, works as a printer but is the brother of Chris and Matt Meeson who run the Masons Arms. When he saw a microbrewery for sale on e-bay he thought it was something he would like to have a go at and he knew he would have a welcoming location.

The equipment came from the award-winning Bitter End brewery in Cumbria who up-sized in late 2004. It is a one-barrel plant which means each brew produces four nine-gallon firkins. As Andy can only brew at weekends and the complete process takes two weekends, four firkins per fortnight is the maximum output. The Old Bog beers are quite often seen at local beer festivals

but most of the product is sold at the Masons Arms although because of the low output they do not always have one on.

Although the volume of beer produced by Old Bog is small the quality and variety is very good. Quarry Gold, a well balanced 4.1% golden ale, has become the most popular and regularly available of its beers but according to [www.beermad.org.uk](http://www.beermad.org.uk) there have been 25 other beers brewed over the past five years some of which are one off's and some which still reappear. Wheat Beer and Half Wit, a dark wheat beer, are two occasional brews which are always popular when they are on.

So go up to the Masons and have some really good beer you are unlikely to get anywhere else. But don't worry too much if there's no Old Bog beer on as you will still be in great pub with great beer.

The Masons Arms in Headington was featured in an article in the Guardian newspaper as the first entry in a list of the top ten brewpubs in the UK out of more than 500 nationally.

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## Compass Brewery

Cowley based Compass Brewery's beers are now more widely available.

Baltic Night Stout (4.8% abv) brewed using the old continental technique of decoction mashing, can now be purchased in bottles from outlets including Millets farm shop in Frilford,

The Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth, The Lamb and Flag in Oxford, Manos Deli in Walton Street, Bellinger's Garage in Grove, Bacchanalia in Cambridge and The Old Cannon Brewpub in Bury St. Edmunds.

Visit [www.compassbrewery.com](http://www.compassbrewery.com) for more information.

# Wetherspoons in Oxford



John Mackie

The first entry of JD Wetherspoons into Oxford came rather late in the day, as far as the Pub chain was concerned. The rumour was that they wanted a city centre site, but property prices were high at the time so they had to go for a location in Cowley. A former car park or garage showroom was not an inspiring choice as the pub has minimal natural light. Anyway, **The William Morris** opened on July 27 2003; not surprisingly it was named after Lord Nuffield (1877-1963) who designed his first car the "Bullnose Morris" in Oxford and later relocated to Cowley. Its subsequent history has not been auspicious. The mixed clientèle caused early problems and there has been a succession of managers; although the beer quality is excellent under Gareth's cellarmanship, and a visit to sample is recommended.

It was not until five years later on August 4th 2008 that JD Wetherspoon acquired their first pub in Oxford city centre. This was **The Four Candles** in George Street and was named after the famous Two Ronnies sketch. Ronnie Barker (1929-2005) was a former pupil of the selective

Oxford High School (as was our previous CAMRA branch treasurer, Dennis Brown) which had been close to the pub. In the sketch Ronnie Barker walks into a hardware store and asks Ronnie Corbert for four candles, but he really wanted fork handles. The pub which has previously been a Yates was refurbished to the Wetherspoon style, but remained pretty much the same as it was before.

Now we have another Spoons in Oxford. This opened on 11th December last year and has been christened **The Swan and Castle**. To their credit Wetherspoons faithfully do some prior research when they open a new venue. The name refers to Oxford Pubs long gone, which were in existence prior to the building of the Westgate Shopping Centre. The new pub was formally part of the Ha Ha chain and is located in Castle Street forming part of the prestigious Oxford Castle development.

Some money has been spent on the recent renovation and the end result is favourable. As the premises were custom designed they are not as large

## wetherspoon

### The Swan & Castle

Castle Street  
Oxford  
OX1 1AY

### The Four Candles

51-53 George Street  
Oxford  
OX1 2BE

### The William Morris

59a Between Towns Road  
Cowley  
Oxford  
OX4 3LR

as some others in the Wetherspoon group, but the subdued colouring gives an air of spaciousness with picture windows overlooking the re-sited bus stops, and a back entrance allows access to the Castle's restaurants and street market area. Stairs leading down to the main toilets are the focal point with two specially commissioned paintings of the castle area as it was. Strategically placed around the bar and restaurant areas are descriptive boards giving details of the past history of the castle and St. Ebbe's districts.

The Pub sold out of cask ale four days after opening (and there are 8 hand pumps). Although it is early days, the prime location of the Swan and Castle may help it to gain a foot hold as the premier Spoons. As far as the chain's incursion into the City of Dreaming

Spires is concerned with three pubs up and running it is more competitive.

So we wish manager Sam Jennings and her team every success into 2010 for this new addition to the Oxford pub and real ale scene.

### Short News

**The Fishes** in North Hinksey has won Greene Kings Head Brewers club prize and has been pub of the month for January 2010. The prize was to have a beer specially brewed for them which they have called "the Fishes" a 4% beer. It is available until 7th January. The gastro pub won it's Cask Mark last year and spend time to train staff on beer handling. They have Greene King IPA and a guest that changes every two weeks.

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

# Diary



**Tuesday 2nd February, 7.30pm  
Branch Meeting.**

King's Arms, 40 Holywell Street, Oxford, OX1 3SP. Business to include Good Beer Guide 2011 selection vote.

**Saturday 6th February, 11.30am  
Pub Walk.**

4.2mile/6.8km countryside walk around part of the Oxford Green Belt Way, from Thornhill Park and Ride, via the two pubs in Horspath, and finishing at the three pubs in Garsington (return to Oxford from Garsington by bus).

**Sunday 21st February, Noon  
Branch Social.**

Cricketers Arms, Littleworth, OX33 1TR. Get-together at the pub's annual beer and sausage festival.

**Saturday 27th February  
Oxford Beer Festival helper's trip.**

Visiting Ringwood Brewery and Winchester.

**Wednesday 3rd March, 7.30pm  
Branch Meeting.**

Wychwood Brewery, Witney.

**Monday 12th April, 7.30pm  
Branch Meeting.**

Kings Head & Bell, 10 East St Helen Street, Abingdon, OX14 5EA.

**Sunday 25th April, 11am  
Pub Walk.**

6.8mile/11km countryside walk along the Thames Path from Farmoor, lunch at the Harcourt Arms (Stanton Harcourt), pint in the Fox (Stanton Harcourt), walk back to Eynsham for further pubs & buses.

For details about social events, contact Neil Hoggarth at [social@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:social@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

For branch meeting details contact Steve Lawrence at [contact@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:contact@oxfordcamra.org.uk)

## Oxford CAMRA Pub Walks

Neil Hoggarth

Oxford CAMRA Pub Walks are a new type of social event that we will be trying out in 2010. Several active members of the branch are keen recreational walkers, so we have decided to organise some walks which take in a number of pubs as part of the route, or as a destination. Our "mission statement" is:

*More drinking than Ramblers outing,  
more walking than a CAMRA pub crawl!*

Full details and maps of the route of each walk can be found at

[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/pub-walks](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/pub-walks) for the benefit of anyone who wants to come along and join us on the day of the walk, and for posterity for any walkers and drinkers who might like to follow in our footsteps.

If you are a CAMRA member and you do one of these walks, please consider submitting beer scores for the pubs - we could really do with more information on the beer quality in our less frequently visited rural pubs.



# Beer Festival Diary



**Friday 5 - Saturday 6 February**  
**Merton Beer Festival**  
 Merton Village Hall, Islip Road, Merton.  
 Around 25 beers, ciders & perrys

**Friday 5 - Sunday 7 February**  
**Dun Cow Winter Ales Festival**  
 West End, Hornton, Banbury  
 01295 670524

**Thursday 18 - Saturday 20 February**  
**27th Luton Beer & Cider Festival**  
 Hightown Sports & Arts Centre,  
 Concorde Street, Luton  
 80 beers plus ciders, perrys & bottled  
 beers  
[www.sbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.sbedscamra.org.uk)

**Friday 19 - Sunday 21 February**  
**Beer and Sausage Festival. Cricketers**  
**Arms, Littleworth.**  
 Local sausages and real mash, For full  
 beer list visit  
[okeyinanandle.blogspot.com](http://okeyinanandle.blogspot.com)  
 01865 872738  
[www.cricketers-arms.co.uk](http://www.cricketers-arms.co.uk)

**Friday 12 - Saturday 13 March**  
**Winslow Beer Festival 2010**  
 Winslow Public Hall, Elmfields, Winslow,  
 Bucks  
 Advance tickets recommended  
[www.winslowlions.org.uk](http://www.winslowlions.org.uk)

**Tuesday 16 - Saturday 20 March**  
**Far From the Madding Crowd Spring**  
**Beer Festival.**  
 Friars Entry, Oxford  
 01865 240900  
[www.maddingcrowd.co.uk](http://www.maddingcrowd.co.uk)

**Friday 19 - Saturday 20 March**  
**13th Bristol Beer Festival**  
 Brunel Passenger Shed, Temple Meads  
 Station, Bristol

120 beers plus 40 ciders & perrys.  
 Entry by ticket only - see website  
[www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk)

**Friday 26 - Sunday 28 March**  
**The Brewery Tap's Spring Beer,**  
**Cider, Jazz & Blues festival**  
 42 Ock Street, Abingdon, OX14 5AG  
 30 beers, 5 ciders, live music.

**Thursday 1 - Monday 5 April**  
**Hop Pole Easter Bank Holiday Beer**  
**Festival**  
 Hop Pole Inn, Bicester Road,  
 Aylesbury  
 01296 482129  
[www.hop-pole.co.uk](http://www.hop-pole.co.uk)

**Friday 2 - Monday 5 April**  
**Woodman Beer Festival**  
 New Yatt Road, North Leigh, nr Witney  
 01993 881790

**Friday 2 - Sunday 4 April**  
**Queen's Head Beer Festival**  
 Queen's Head, Church Road, Horspath.  
 01865 875567  
 Music on Saturday with Frank Abrams.  
[www.thequeensheadhorspath.co.uk](http://www.thequeensheadhorspath.co.uk)

**Friday 23 - Saturday 24 April**  
**Chippenham Beer Festival**  
 Olympiad Leisure Centre, Monkton  
 Park, Chippenham  
[www.nwwiltscamra.org.uk](http://www.nwwiltscamra.org.uk)

**Thursday 6 - Saturday 8 May**  
**Banbury Beer Festival**  
 TA Centre, Oxford, Banbury  
 90 beers plus ciders, perrys & foreign  
 beers  
[www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk)

## County Matters (Continued from Page 6)

sprawling old building. The best bit is saved for the bar. Three beers are served from the Brakspear, Wychwood, Jennings, Ringwood and Marstons range along with a very informative programme of 31 bottled beers from around the world. Well worth a visit.

**The Masons Arms** out the back at Brize Norton is a not to be missed locals bar serving up to three ever changing beers which on the night were from Sharps, Moles and Brains. This very old farmhouse type pub on the old road to Carterton with a comfortable garden serves good basic food and of course is another plane spotting meeting place. Another couple of hours drinking - will the wallet last?

One of the best pubs to visit in recent times **The Queens Arms** in Eynsham is a must visit if you want a friendly welcome from Pete the landlord of 26 years (yes 26). Up to three guest beers are served in this Admiral Taverns house which on the night were Sharps Doom Bar and a White Horse, again two tasty LocAles. This old multi roomed locals pub tucked away in the back streets of Eynsham serves good basic food. For a landlord to survive this length of time in today's greedy and cut-throat brewing and pub world is a superb achievement.

If you liked the Queens then get on the S1 bus from the centre of Eynsham to Witney where you will find possibly the best selection of pubs in any county town for miles.

Good reports have come in from **The House of Windsor** always serving four good quality guest beers is another com-

fortable locals pub in the west end of the town. Close by, The Elm Tree, another busy locals pub serving fine beers from the Brakspear and Wychwood range has just changed hands but continues much as before.

Around the corner the very successful and popular **Plough** continues to serve good quality beers including a Butts offering, Barbus Barbus; and do not forget the very comfortable ambiance and exceptional food.

Up beyond the market place **The Angel** is another comfortable family run pub serving good quality food and Courage Bitter plus two guest beers from the Spirit group.

Across the road in Corn St is the 2009 CAMRA West Oxfordshire Pub of the Year. You need to visit to see why. **The Eagle Tavern**, a superb locals pub in the centre of a very prosperous county town owned by a superb local brewery, Hook Norton and run by a - Well he is not superb, but super at being a landlord. Good everything, well worth a visit.

A good ten minute stroll down Corn St will bring you to **The New Inn**, another well run pub opposite the bus garage. Martin, the landlord, offers up to five well kept beers and must be commended. This is a drinking pub, no food served, a rare situation these days. Buses would be missed trying to get away from the super beers served here.

The local branch of Camra is always looking for reports on YOUR local pub. Come on get out there and tell us about your local or come to one of the branch meetings.

# The King and Queen Wheatley



We are a traditional pub with traditional pub games. We have a large beer garden in which there is a collection of birds of prey.

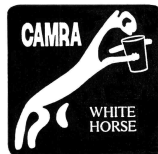
- Traditional pub games - aunt sally, darts and pool
- Good selection of real ales
- Dogs welcome on leads
- Live music every last Saturday of the month
- Meat Draw every Sunday 1pm
- Birds of prey handling days and Hawk walk days
- Outside bars catered for



57 High Street, Wheatley, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX33 1XT

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# White Horse Branch



The White Horse Branch of Camra includes, as well as numerous villages, the market towns of Faringdon and Wantage, the latter being the birthplace of King Alfred the Great in 849. Formed originally as a sub-branch of the Oxford branch in the early 1990s, it fills a rural area not covered by the City branch or other neighbouring branches in Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire.

## Our Website

Visit our website, [www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk](http://www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk) for a wealth of information about breweries, pubs, events and news in our area. If you have any news or other material that you feel should be included on the website, please contact [webmaster@whitehorsecamra.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@whitehorsecamra.org.uk).

## Social Events

As well as organising the beer festival, the branch has an active social programme. This includes visits to beer festivals (including Ascot and Swindon), breweries (recent trips include Vale and Wye Valley Breweries) hop farms, maltings and of course public houses; often two or three of these elements are included on the same day.

## Diary of Events

**Tuesday 23rd February 2010 at 7.45pm**  
**Branch Meeting**  
Woodman, Fernham.

**Tuesday 30th March 2010 at 7.30pm**  
**AGM**  
Hatchet, Childrey.

## The Royal Oak's Triple Success

The Royal Oak, Wantage is through to the national final of the Camra Pub of the Year, having reached the last four. The pub is already well known to real ale drinkers in Oxfordshire. It had been voted CAMRA's Central Southern Region Pub of the Year for the second year running and then reached the country's top 16 pubs.

This long-standing Good Beer Guide entry had already been named the White Horse Branch's Pub of the Year and

Oxfordshire Pub of the Year.

Jackie Parker, CAMRA's Regional Director, in presenting the Southern Region award, said: "With dozens of pubs closing down every month, this award is a tribute to the Royal Oak which continues to flourish thanks to the warm, friendly welcome that greets you on arrival, and the wide range of quality beers including Dr Hexter's Healer (named after the landlord and CAMRA Bronze medal winner in the 2009 Champion Beer of Britain Competition), and now beers from the new local Pitstop brewery in Grove."



# Pitstop

John Rees

Pitstop Brewery, set up last year by Peter Fowler as a three-barrel plant at Bellinger's Garage in Grove, has gone from strength to strength. At the 2008 Wantage Beer Festival, its imperial-style stout Sump was voted Beer of the Festival. It has followed this triumph by beating 163 other real ales to scoop Beer of the Festival award at the Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival in September, and Star won at the 2009 Wantage Beer Festival.

Peter said: 'These awards are decided by drinkers at the festivals so it means a great deal to me. It shows that there is a place for small craft breweries dedicated to producing a range of quality beers based on the very best ingredients.'

Peter has now expanded to a ten-barrel plant, and his portfolio has increased, with a wide range of beers now available, of varying styles and strengths, which are proving increasingly popular both in local pubs and beer festivals. Other brews include Penelope, a ruby-coloured mild which weighs in at 5%, the powerful Bitumen (10%) and Course Tart, which he is entering into the Guinness Book of Records in the hope that it will be crowned the world's bitterest ale. Brewery visits can be arranged by appointment.

The Londis shop at Bellinger's also stocks a real ale selection offering over 370 varieties of bottled beers, most of which are bottle-conditioned. There is a 10% discount for Camra members (except on fuel) and Peter also hopes to have Pitstop beers available on the forecourt.



Contact: peter@splij.com  
07870577742

Beers available at 'The Royal Oak'



**The Royal Oak**  
Newbury Street, Wantage. OX12 8DF

CAMRA Oxfordshire Pub of the year 2009  
CAMRA White Horse Pub of the year 2009  
CAMRA Central Southern Region  
Pub of the year 2009

*'In the last 4 pubs for National Pub of Year'*

Home of 'Dr Hexter's Healer'  
Winner Champion Beer of Britain 2009  
Strong Ale

# Wantage Beer Festival



Steven Green

The Wantage Beer Festival was held at the Masonic Hall in Wantage town centre on 20th/21st November. This is organised by the White Horse branch of CAMRA, which being one of our neighbouring branches meant that several members from our Oxford branch volunteered to help at the festival and many others made the trip from Oxford to sample the beers.

The Festival was a great success, with over 650 people attending during the two days, an increase of 200 on last year. The event featured 31 beers and 10 ciders and perry, with some 2,000 pints sold (85% of the total).



Peter Fowler and John Rees

The choice of beers was exceptional with most beers coming from local breweries and some beers from national award winners.

Locally brewed beers included Star, Penelope and award winning Sump (7% abv) from the Pitstop Brewery in Grove as well as beers from Halfpenny in Lechlade, Loddon's, West Berkshire Brewery, White Horse Brewery with one my favourite beers Black Horse Porter, Vale Brewery, Appleford, Butts and Ridgeway. National beers were represented by Sarah Hughes Dark ruby which was the winner of the strong mild category at the 2009 Winter Beer of Britain awards.

The first beer to be sold out was Thornbridge's Jaipur IPA (5.9% abv) winner of the 2008 strong bitter class. Beer styles ranged from session bitters such as Loddon's Hoppit and Durham Magus up to strong black ales such Anastasia's Imperial Stout at 8%. I managed to sample over half of the

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available beers over the course of the 2 days, and they were all very good making it very difficult to choose just one to vote as beer of the festival.

In spite of this difficulty the beer of the festival was Pitstop Brewery's Star, a firkin of which had been donated by brewer Peter Fowler in aid of the nominated Oxfordshire charity, Soundabout, which helps people who have severe and complex learning difficulties. With the addition of donations and unused beer tokens, this means that the charity should benefit to the tune of some £280. Ridgeway's Bad Elf came second, with Thornbridge Jaipur IPA third.

The festival souvenir half pint glasses, also marked with a one third pint line, proved very popular. These were sponsored jointly by The Royal Oak Inn and Pitstop Brewery. Neil Crook, White Horse Branch chairman, said: 'It was notable that many people took advantage of the one third pint option to try more beers while still drinking sensibly. We also signed up 34 new members to Camra at the event, beating last year's total of 29, so it proves the campaigning value of small events featuring good quality beers.'

Neil was also grateful for the large number of volunteers who made the festival possible, not only from White Horse Branch but from Oxford, West Berkshire and other branches.

The festival while being quite small in comparison to the Oxford Beer Festival was very well attended and had a very friendly atmosphere. It was a place where you could have a friendly chat

with many interesting people. Attendees included brewers, publicans, CAMRA members and other people who appreciate a good pint of English Real Ale imbibed in good company. Despite there being nearly 400 people under one roof drinking lots of beer, there was not a single incident of any drunken unruly behaviour, which shows that real ale drinkers are a friendly peaceful group of people who just like a good pint in the English tradition. The beer lasted until the end of the festival, with people also able to take some home with them in plastic take-out containers.

This was the only the second festival held by the present committee of the White Horse Branch, and they must be congratulated on organizing the event so well.

## Short News

**The Prince of Wales** in Shippon has been closed and planning permission sought for conversion into residential use. A feasibility study concludes that the pub is no longer viable.

**Harcourt Arms** in Stanton Harcourt under the guidance of landlords Derek and Jo Wilby, has opened a village shop after the local shop closed just before Christmas, due to the owner retiring. The new shop will also host the mobile post office three mornings a week. Derek likes to keep a good selection of ales with at least two session beers; Blacksheep & Adnams always on with guest ales (some staying longer than others!) including Brakspear, Hobgoblin, Broadside, Cornish, Ruddles, 6X & many more.

## The CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM



Villa Marina, Isle of Man, 16-18 April 2010

Preparation is now well under way for the 2010 CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM, which will be held at the Isle of Man's Villa Marina complex, and will commence on Friday 16th April and end mid-afternoon on Sunday 18th April 2010.

The weekend is open to all CAMRA members, and is an opportunity for them to discuss future CAMRA policy and direction, as well as a chance to socialise with friends and other CAMRA members.

The weekend gives members the opportunity to:

- \* Review what has been happening at branch, regional and national level over the past year
- \* Have your say, review campaigning themes and form policy
- \* Hear guest speakers on issues related to beer, brewing and key campaigns
- \* Meet the formal requirements of an AGM, including presentation of accounts
- \* Meet up with CAMRA members from around the country, National Executive and HQ staff members
- \* Discuss ideas to forward the campaign through workshops, policy discussion groups and seminars
- \* Enjoy a few beers with local specialities in the Viking and Celtic themed members bars - A member only beer festival put on in conjunction with the AGM
- \* Visit pubs in Douglas and the surrounding areas
- \* Visit local breweries on organised trips

Trips for the weekend are still in the planning stages, but it is proposed that there will be trips to all three of the island's breweries: Okells, Bushys and Old Laxey. Traditionally, these trips have been run on the Friday and Saturday evenings of the weekend, but for this year only the trips are being scheduled for the week running up to the weekend, as well as throughout the weekend itself.

There are also plans to organise various other trips giving members the opportunity to see more of the island.

It is now possible to pre-register to attend the Members' Weekend by going online to the CAMRA website [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk), and following the link from the Members' Weekend pages. Further information about the weekend can also be found in 'What's Brewing' and online, and there will be regular updates in the run up to the weekend.

All CAMRA members are welcome to attend, whether this is their first or fifteenth Members' Weekend, and it promises to be an enjoyable and informative few days. The Members' Weekend is just one of the benefits of joining CAMRA, so if you are not a member, why not join today by completing the form in this magazine, or by going on-line to [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) and clicking on 'Join Us'.





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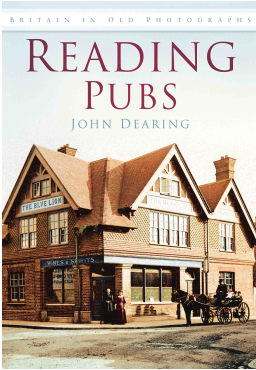
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# Book Review



John Mackie



## Reading Pubs by John Dearing.

Patriarch and former chairman of Reading CAMRA John Dearing is the author of "Reading Pubs". This publication by the History

This wonderful selection of archive and new photographs and etchings relates the evolution of Reading's many pubs from their working class origins to the theme bars and major chain pubs of today. John expertly guides the reader through these pubs and their history and adds life to images with tales and anecdotes from regulars and local characters. This exceptional book provides a fascinating and comprehensive chronicle and is a must read for anyone interested in pub and brewery history.

Press in their "Britain in Old Photographs" series is a pictorial and descriptive history of the coaching Inns, taverns, public houses and breweries of Reading from the middle ages up to a present day Wetherspoons.

The town has always been home to a multitude of hostleries, beerhouses, and breweries but over the centuries it has undergone huge changes; and these institutions have had to adapt or be left by the wayside.

John works every year at the Oxford Beer Festival and is a regular on our Festival helpers trips. In true Alfred Hitchcock style he features anonymously within the book and the observant reader will also spot a few other present day worthies of Reading CAMRA.

The book costs £12.99 from The History Press.

Want to know all the latest news and events?

Share information about what's happening in your area?

Sign up to our email list at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists)

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◆ ◆ ◆  
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.

◆ ◆ ◆  
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