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ISSUE 66
February-March 2011



the Oxford Drinker

Local Breweries Visited

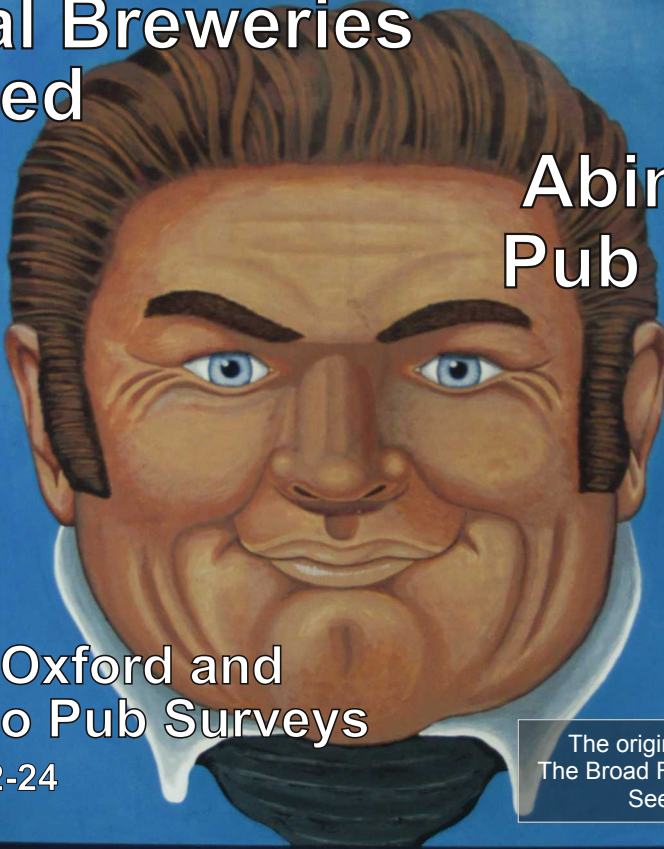
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The original pub sign of The Broad Face in Abingdon. See page 6.

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5000 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs across the branch area; including Oxford, Abingdon, Witney, Faringdon, Eynsham, Kidlington, Bampton and Wantage.

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Valuable contributions to this edition have been made by Matthew Bullock, Neil Hoggarth, Richard Queralt, Dave Cogdell, Lawrence Harmen, David Hill and others.

The next publication will be issued in **April 2011**.

Deadline for the next issue is **18th March 2011**

To advertise contact Johanne Green on 07766-663215 or send an email to advertising@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Send news, information and articles to Steven and Johanne Green; editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk

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Welcome to the first Drinker of 2011.

In this issue we have reports about presenting Champion LocAle Beer of Oxford Beer Festival Awards to Vale, Shotover and Thame Breweries. We have not yet visited West Berkshire Brewery, and are looking forward to it. It should be mentioned that Shotover and Thame Breweries only started brewing commercially within the last two years and to get an award like this, has delighted both brewers. The managing director of Vale Brewery, Ian Mackey, said that it was great for Head Brewer David Benton to get recognition. They can always be sure to be told if something is wrong - but if the beer is just right - people just drink it!

Our local breweries are thriving, but they do need pubs to serve their beer. With many pub closures in our branch, it is heartwarming to visit the Masons Arms in Headington. A real community pub that has won Oxford City Pub Of The Year 2010. Pubs are important and we must remember, that if we don't actually support them by using them, we will lose them.

It is now a year ago that we took over as editors and the magazine has seen some changes since we started. Our first issue (60) had 24 pages and was partly in black and white. Please keep on sending us news and articles, small snippets of news are always welcome. Email it to editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk

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Oxford CAMRA Matters



Neil Hoggarth – Oxford CAMRA branch chairman

The branch had a busy end to 2010, with another very successful Oxford Beer Festival in October, and the voting and presentation of our Pub-of-the-Year awards.

Oxford Beer Festival! I would like to extend my thanks again to all the volunteers who helped staff and organise the Beer Festival, and everyone who came along to enjoy the beers. As in previous years feedback from people visiting the festival was overwhelmingly positive. To the few people who have expressed disappointment about the beer range available on Friday evening, or not being able to get a beer on Saturday evening, I apologise - the festival is in some ways a "victim of its own success". There is a limit to how many casks we can pack into the venue (while still leaving some space for drinkers!). The key defining characteristic of "Real Ale" is that it is a live product, with yeast for secondary fermentation present in the cask. The yeast has to settle for at least 24 hours before the beer will pour clear and be fit to serve, and the cask can't be moved or disturbed once this process has started. Because of this, all the beer that we are going to sell needs to be set up the day before we open to the public, and once the event is underway we can't "restock" with beer part way through. We are however giving thought to how we might reorganise the layout in order to increase the number of casks for our next festival.

Pub Of The Year: I would also like to thank everyone who took the trouble to visit the shortlisted pubs and vote on the Town-and-Village Pub-of-the-Year and/or the City Pub-of-the-Year competitions. The number of votes cast was well up this year, and it is great to see more CAMRA members taking an interest. Questions were raised at the October branch meeting about why the voting system is organised the way it is, and in particular why it is a requirement to visit all the shortlisted pubs before expressing a preference. We have used this approach for a number of years in the City Pub-of-the-Year competition (with the exception

of 2009, when we accidentally left it too late to organise the voting forms and stamps!). The intention is to try and prevent the vote simply being a "popularity contest" that the pub with the biggest collection of loyal regulars wins - we want to make sure that everyone who votes has had at least a brief look at all the pubs in contention and given them a fair crack of the whip. It is also important to understand why CAMRA runs Pub of the Year competitions. It is not just about picking the "best" pub and handing over the award certificate. Fundamentally, Pub-of-the-Year is a campaigning tool: we want to raise the profile of good real ale pubs in general, and encourage both customers and publicans to think about what factors make a good pub. Publicising the shortlist of five pubs for each competition, and encouraging drinkers to visit them, means that ten good pubs get some much deserved recognition and publicity.

Good Beer Guide 2012: The branch's current activities are mostly focused on selection for the 2012 edition of the Good Beer Guide, which will be published in September. At the December branch meeting we used the "league table" compiled using Beer Scores that CAMRA members have submitted over the last year to draw up a long list of possible candidate pubs. At the January meeting we debated the list and narrowed it down shortlist of 27 pubs, and volunteers are surveying those pubs now so that we have the information required if they are selected for the Guide. At the February meeting we face the very difficult task of voting a final selection of just 17 pubs (picked from a branch area that covers some 300).

Pub Surveys: Looking forwards, our next big area of activity in the coming months will be to undertake a comprehensive survey of the pubs right across the branch area, bringing the information in our pub database up to date and preparing for the publication of a new branch-wide Pub Guide in book form, which we intend to launch at our beer festival in late October this year. As well as being a serious data-gathering exercise this will inevitably involve a lot of pub crawls and outings - do come along and join in!



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Real Ale Returns to Oxford Pubs



David Hill

A number of Oxford pubs which have not had real ale for years have started sprouting handpumps.

Although they may not always have real ale **The Corridor** on Cowley Road now has a hand-pump while the **Old Black Horse** on St Clements has two and **O'Neil's** on George Street has three. **The City Arms** on Cowley Road also now has three handpumps and while on my first visit only one had beer (**Brakspear Oxford Gold**) on my next visit all three did (**Brakspear Bitter**, **Marston EPA**, and **Old Hooky**).

None of these pubs has undergone image changes so I imagine the real ale is aimed at the existing customers, showing the pub companies' belief that real ale is becoming more popular. As Brakspear and Hook Norton seem the breweries they are going for they must also be presuming that local products are going to sell.

Let us now hope that these beers are kept in good condition or they won't sell and the hand-pumps will have to be taken out again. So far the ones I've sampled haven't been too bad.

Traditional Pub Sign Restored to Pub

JoHanne Green

The landlord of **The Broad Face** in Abingdon, Dushan Salwathura also known as Dusty, has managed to track down the old pub sign that was taken down some

years ago and replaced with the present pub sign.

Many locals felt at the time that the new sign does not have real character and that it was

wrong to make the change. Now the old sign will be used again thanks to Dushan. He found the pub sign, bought it back and has had it restored. Dushan said: "This pub sign is distinctive and a part of both Abingdon's and the pub's heritage." The old pub sign will be put up in the near future.

The First Broad Face Beer Festival will run on 1st, 2nd and 3rd April. There will be live music, local ale and cider.



Present pub sign (left) and the recovered original sign (right)



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Abingdon Pub Crisis!

Abingdon has suffered from a number of pub closures recently.

- **The Fitzharris Arms**, Thornhill Walk, was closed in the beginning of December 2010 after Greene King sold the pub to Tesco. Greene King's comment on the customers fury in losing their pub without consultation or warning was that they could go to the "nearby" Boundary House. For many of the regulars, being elderly, this is quite a long way and they relied on the Fitzharris Arms as their community pub.
- We hear that **The Ox**, Oxford Road is closing. The landlords have gone to manage **The Black Swan**, Bath Street.
- **The Nags Head**, Bridge Street, closed its doors 4th January 2011. Punch Taverns who leased the pub decided that it was not viable anymore after a poor winter. We can only hope the owner of the building wants to see it opening as a pub again and can find some one willing to take it on. With the development of the Old Gaol, the pub could see renewed trade as the whole area will be more attractive.
- **The Plough**, Stert Street, (a Greene King pub) has been up for sale and has now been sold. We are not sure of the new owner's plans as to whether or not it will remain as a pub.

News Snippets

The Jam Factory, Park End Street is having a hand pump installed, which will serve real ale from the Vale Brewery at Brill. This complements the existing range of local craft brewed lagers and international bottled beers.

The landlady, Lesley at **The Old Anchor Inn** in Abingdon is leaving. We wish her all the best and thank her for the wonderful beer festivals, she has put on in the past. As yet we do not know Greene King's plans for the pub.




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-  Bank Holiday Monday - Charity Poker Tournament
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-  Thursday 28th - Join us for our Big Prize Charity Quiz night
-  Friday 29th - Watch the Royal Wedding live at our traditional garden party, with Live Jazz, BBQ & mini beer festival

plus more music, more games, more prizes

Hope you can join us!

LocAle at The Brewery Tap



JoHanne Green

Matthew Heritage of the Brewery Tap in Abingdon is a landlord who knows his beers, and wants to be able to serve a good selection outside of Greene Kings range. The Brewery Tap gained the LocAle status in the beginning of May 2010 and succeeded in serving local beers almost continually until the autumn.

Being tied to Greene King (GK) he was not actually allowed to serve beers outside of the GK range and had to stop doing so for a while. The Oxford CAMRA Branch was kept informed of this and gave him time to try and sort it all out. Members naturally were disappointed in not being able to be served local beers, when the pub promised them this through the LocAle sign. Now though, it seems worth our while to have stood by this pub throughout the time it took to get local beers back.

After months of negotiation Greene King has now allowed Matt to have two hand pumps free to a third party supplier. I understand that this concession comes with stringent criteria; there is a corkage fee from GK on every cask outside their range. The pub has to be in the Good Beer Guide, and Cask Marque accredited as well as part of Greene King's own Head Brewers Club (a selection by GK themselves to identify the very best of their tenanted and leased pubs for cask ales). In addition at least

42% of draft sales has to be cask.

Now two hand pumps can be sourced from local breweries, and Matt intends to rotate them. In addition the remaining 4 hand pumps will have as many guest beers from the GK range as possible to make up to the 6 hand pumps on the bar. We can only look forward to the interesting beers that will appear over the next year.

As a CAMRA member living in a town with Greene King dominating the pub scene I can only salute Greene King in this move (and Matt in hanging in there and getting what he wanted). I think they will find that they have done well with this deal. My only hope is that GK will let other pubs that meet the criteria do the same. If eligible tied landlords would enter into similar contracts with Greene King, real ale drinkers could be given real choice in the range of beers on offer in some GK pubs.

Matt has put a price freeze on Morland Original, Fosters, Stowford Press, Coke, and Lemonade, every thing else will have to go up in price with the VAT hike. The 15p discount on beer for CAMRA members stays in place.

The Brewery Tap's 6th Real Ale, Cider and Sausage Festival will run in the 2nd week of the Abingdon Arts Fest from 25th to 27th March with live music on all 3 days.

The Prince Of Wales, Shippon

In this worrying trend of pub closures we have to remember the pubs that are still trading. If we don't use them, we will lose them. Abingdon has a real gem of a pub just outside our doorstep!



The Prince of Wales in Shippon, Barrow Road, is a free house and as such a rare thing in Abingdon, that is dominated by Greene King. If you fancy local beer this is the place for you. Phillip Radbourne, the landlord, always has

Abingdon Bridge from Loose Cannon, **Prospect** from Shotover, **Doombar**, **Timothy Taylor Landlord**, and **Black Sheep** on the hand pumps. One last hand pump has guest beers on, call in to see what it is. In addition home cooked food is served in the comfortable dining room. The menu includes pub classics, vegetarian meals, and Sunday Lunch. The pub has open fire places in the bar and dining room, perfect for cold winter evenings.

Due to post code technicalities the Prince of Wales is part of the White Horse CAMRA Branch, but that should not deter us from using this excellent pub. Please remember to rate your beers when visiting.



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Brewery News



Loose Cannon Brewery.

The range of beers is being extended with "**Loose Cannon Pale**" 3.7%. It should be available mid February. As they did with Abingdon Bridge, they will brew two different versions using different hops and let customers decide which they prefer.

The **Kings Head and Bell** is now using **Abingdon Bridge** Bitter as flavour for their fish batter and steak and ale pies

Vale Brewery.

The Open Day was a massive success, in no small part due to the coach of Oxford CAMRA members. The run up to Christmas was busy, but January has held up much better than expected. They have held their pricing to pubs and swallowed material and fuel cost increases, but VAT is unavoidable and has been passed on.

In 2011, they will continue with a special brew each month. This gives David Renton a chance to experiment with alternative hop and malt combinations. The February offer is **Plucky Pheasant**, a 4.1% Reddish Chestnut beer. The hop combination used will offer hints of fruit and spices to taste and a fragrant berry fruit flavour.

West Berkshire Brewery

The West Berkshire Brewery is in the process of developing a new brewery in Frilsham, near Newbury - just around the corner (literally) from its current brew house in Yattendon. Coincidentally, the new site is located exactly between its present home and the location of its original brew house established behind the Pot Kiln in Frilsham, where brewing was carried out for several years.

The new brewery is being planned to high environmental standards and will include a reed-bed drainage system and a modern, energy-efficient brewing plant. See the website at <http://www.wbbrew.com/> for news on progress.

Being based in a rural area of West Berkshire, for 2011 the theme for their popular monthly

beers is Old Agricultural Tools. The year started with **Switching Bill** in January to be followed by **Twobill** and **Seedlip** in February and March respectively.

Hook Norton Brewery

January will see the return to the free trade of Hook Norton's **Double Stout**. It is the first in Hook Norton's Brewers Selection 2011 range of nine beers, which will be available throughout the year. Hook Norton Double Stout at 4.8 percent ABV beer is a smooth, full-bodied stout with a refreshing hoppy aftertaste. In March look out for **First Light**, a very pale, light brew with a complex hop aroma, which will be on sale for three months.

Wychwood Brewery

The Wychwood guest ale for February is the ever popular 4% '**Dirty Tackle**'. March's guest ale sees the return of **Paddy's Tout**.

The Brakspear guest ale for March is the once permanently brewed **Brakspear Special**. This beer has many fans across the region and so we are really pleased that it will once again be available if only for a month.

The Brakspear Ale Trail which ran in 19 Oxford city centre pubs during October, November, and December was their most popular ever with more t-shirts collected by ale trailers than in the previous 3 years.

White Horse Brewery

White Horse Brewery are proud to announce that they are supplying the Nicholson's pub group with **Black Horse Porter** 5.0% till February and **White Horse Village Idiot** 4.1% till May, this will also be in some of the other Mitchell & Butler outlets.

As from March 2011 White Horse Brewery will open its Brewery Shop selling all their beers in different sizes Polypins, bottles, firkins, four pint jugs and so on, along with their White Horse Merchandise and other local made produce such as Cheese, Jams and Chutneys. For more information see <http://www.breweryoxfordshire.co.uk>



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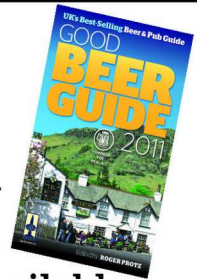
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Shotover Brewery Award Trip



JoHanne Green

A small band of CAMRA members set out to Shotover Brewery on 27th November to present Ed Murray with his LocAle Champion Beer of the Oxford Beer Festival Award. He won the joint runner up award at a blind tasting at the Festival. The award shows that Ed must be doing something right. He set up Shotover in 2009 with a very definite plan to brew one or two distinctive beers concentrating on perfecting the beer and keeping it consistent. Part of his business model is also to only sell his beers locally and



Ed Murray presented with award from branch vice chairman, Matt Bullock

make a name for himself as an Oxfordshire brewer. Ed invited us into his brewery and talked with great passion about his beer and all that comes with running a small brewery. After having collaborated with the Plot 16 artists he has been doing some dry hopping himself. We tried several special addition dry hopped Prospect, that was absolutely

outstanding. All in all it was a very interesting visit and we ended the morning in the nearby **Queens Head Pub** for lunch and more **Prospect** and **Scholar**.

A Brill Day Out

Grahame & Sue Allen, Alan & Marie Oliver

On a cold, wet winter Saturday morning a large group of members of the Oxford branch of CAMRA forced themselves onto a coach and headed into the wilds of Brill, battling through snow, to reach their destination – the Vale Brewery Open Day.

Their mission (and strangely quite a few were happy to accept it) was to make a presentation to the Brewery following the blind tasting



David Renton receives award for Vale Gravitas

Locale competition at the recent Oxford Beer Festival and then sample some (OK then, we admit it – all) of the wonderful beers brewed by Vale, including a beer brewed especially for the day. It is also rumoured that certain members were seen quaffing rosé wine out of pint glasses (for a reasonable fee, names will not be revealed....!)

After a tour of the brewery led by David Renton the Head Brewer, during which we were shown the new 20 barrel plant imported from Canada, we embarked upon the challenge previously mentioned – sampling all 9 of the available beers. **Gravitas** hit the spot as usual and was our favourite of the day.

We would strongly recommend checking out the Brewery shop which offers the full range of Vale beers in bottles plus a large selection of other bottle conditioned and imported beers. They also stock a good range of bottled wine



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and a select few malt whiskies. All the options are very reasonably priced and discount is available on boxes of 12 Vale beers.

Reluctantly, we dragged ourselves out of the marquee and stumbled back on the coach for the next destination – Thame. On arrival at Thame, we were greeted by a downpour so we headed to the nearest pub – the **James Figg**. A modern style long, narrow pub aimed at younger people but sporting 4 real ales – **Vale Best, Wells Bombardier, Purity Mad Goose & Hook Norton Jackpot**. We chose to have the latter at 3.8% and found it to be in good order. Our branch Treasurer was seen to be babysitting as we braved the rain to find another hostelry. We made our way through the town to the **Falcon Inn**, passing several other pubs with no real ales on offer, as this had been recommended to us. The Falcon Inn is a Hook Norton establishment with 3 beers available – we all had a half, as time was getting on and we needed to be at the Cross Keys in time for another presentation resulting from the aforementioned blind tasting Locale competition. **The Cross Keys** is the Thame Brewery brew pub usually offering 6 real ales

including their own. On the day we tried Thame Brewery's **Mr Splodges mild, A Very Xmas, DBC's Durdledore, Abbeydale Daily Bread, Vale Best** and one we can't decipher from Grahame's list! All were good and the pub dog was very happy to help us eat our crisps...

So it was time to return home, and thanks to our driver Mike Bridges and Worth's Coaches our day was complete.



Peter Lambert from Thame Brewery presented with award by Matt Bullock.

Masons Arms – Pub Of The Year



JoHanne Green

The Masons Arms in Headington Quarry was voted Oxford City Pub of the Year (POTY) for 2010. The result was announced at our December meeting and the award was presented to Chris Meeson at our Christmas social on 16th December.

The Masons Arms is a family run free house. Chris and Matthew Meeson run the pub, with their mum Stephanie helping out as well. They have their own little Brewery on the premises, The Old Bog Brewery, where Andrew Meeson brews his great beers.

Chris said, “We’re a family run pub and there is always a family member behind the bar along with other staff. We think that does contribute to the atmosphere of our pub, and that means something in this day and age, where many pubs often change management. We have spent the last 13 years building up the reputation of the pub, working hard to serve brilliant beer for our customers. We support the local community and they support us. We have events on most nights from darts, billiard and quiz nights.”

Chris and Matthew won their first Pub of the Year Award from Oxford CAMRA in 2004 and even won it again the following year! Winning Pub of the Year 2010 means a lot to Chris and Matthew; they appreciate the recognition of

their commitment to real ale and the pub. There is no doubt that the pub trade is hard with the recent VAT hike and cheap supermarket booze; pub going habits have changed and many pubs have to close down. Not so for the Masons Arms. Our chairman Neil Hoggarth summed up the pubs qualities: “Real ale needs real pubs, and the Masons Arms certainly qualifies. The pub’s commitment to real ale is obvious. They have a good range of beers from small independent breweries, and it is always served in tip-

top condition. It is an excellent example of what a good, thriving community pub should be.”

You will note that only Chris Meeson is there to receive the award. Unfortunately Matthew could not attend, as he had come down with the flu. We wish him all the best.

The evening we presented the award the pub was packed with CAMRA members and local patrons. Andrew showed up a little late with very spicy home made sausage rolls and sandwiches were brought out for all to have. The beer on tap was excellent and a great night was had by all.

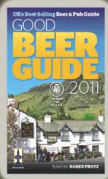
The Old Bog Brewery won Beer of the Festival at Wantage Beer Festival with **Monsterous Mild** (5.6% ABV) and the presentation will take place on 5th March at 4pm.



From Left to Right: Neil Hoggarth (CAMRA branch chairman), Chris, Stephanie, Andrew Meeson

To illustrate just what pubs are up against we can look at the 26% increase in beer duty over the last two years. The government seems hell bent on increasing beer duty at 2% above

inflation on top of the recent 2.5% VAT hike. Write to your MP and tell them that you want to keep your pubs. Ask them to stop punishing a trade that provides jobs and promotes responsible drinking.



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**Oxford City
CAMRA
Pub of the Year
2004 - 2005
&
2010**

Quiz night every Saturday
Function Room for hire
Large Garden
SKY HD
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Home of the Headington Beer Festival

LocAle Pubs

Pubs in our area that always serve real ale from local breweries:

- ▶ Cricketer's Arms, Littleworth
- ▶ Stock's Bar, Abingdon
- ▶ White Horse, Broad Street, Oxford
- ▶ Gloucester Arms, Oxford
- ▶ Duke's Cut, Oxford
- ▶ Brewery Tap, Abindgon
- ▶ The Queen's Head, Horspath
- ▶ Far from the Madding Crowd, Oxford
- ▶ Chester Arms, Oxford
- ▶ Masons Arms, Headington
- ▶ The Gardener's Arms, Jericho
- ▶ The Honey Pot, Oxford
- ▶ The Horseshoes, Witney
- ▶ The Plough Inn, Witney
- ▶ The New Inn, Witney

The CAMRA LocAle award is presented to pubs that endeavour to always serve local ales brewed within 30 miles. If you think your pub should join the scheme then please get in touch by calling Sam French on 07905 212318 or email locale@oxfordcamra.org.uk

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Oxford CAMRA Branch Diary



Fri 4th February, 6pm-11pm

Social at Merton Winter Beer Festival

Merton Village Hall, Islip Road, Merton, Nr Bicester
Branch Social at Merton Winter Beer Festival
www.mertonbeerfestival.co.uk

Sat 5th February, 2pm-9pm

Social at Kings Head & Bell Beer Festival

East St. Helen's Street, Abingdon.

Branch social at the Kings Head & Bell Winter Beer Festival.

Sat 12th February, 2pm-11pm

Abingdon Brewery visit and Pub crawl

Loose Cannon Brewery, 6 Suffolk Way, Abingdon, OX14 5JX

Joint social with Vale of White Horse branch of CAMRA. Visit to Loose Cannon Brewery at 2pm, followed by crawl of Abingdon pubs.

Sat 19th February, 11am-6pm

Young Members Reading Pub Crawl

Reading

A 'return leg' following the visit from young members of the Reading branch to Oxford back in November. Meet at Oxford Train Station around 11am. The Reading branch will then take us on a guided tour of the best pubs in Reading.

There is no age limit and everyone is welcome to come along.

Sat 26th February, 9:45am-9:30pm

Beer Festival Helpers Trip

Derby and Birmingham.

Departs: Oxford Railway Station at 09.45
Returns: Oxford Railway Station at 21.30

Thank you trip for beer festival volunteers.

We will depart from Oxford and head straight for Derby, where there are many good pubs to choose from. After 5 hours in Derby we drive to Birmingham for 90 minutes to visit more good pubs.

The trip is free to all those who volunteered to work at the beer festival. For those who did not work at the festival, seats will be a bargain £5, subject to availability.

Wed 2nd March, 7:30pm-9:30pm

Branch Meeting

Brewery Tap, 40-42 Ock Street, Abingdon, OX14 5BZ

Sat 5th March, 4pm-9pm

Old Bog Brewery Presentation

Masons Arms, 2 Quarry School Place, Headington Oxford OX3 8LH

Old Bog's Monstrous Mild was Wantage Beer Festival 'beer of the festival'.

Presentation will be made by the White Horse Branch at 4pm.

Sat 12th March, 12pm-3:30pm

5th Oxford CAMRA Pub Walk

Kings Arms Kidlington 4 The Moors, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 2AJ

3.5mile circular, going via Hampton Poyle, Thrupp and Kidlington including 4 pubs.

Sat 26th March

Black Country Trip

Walsall & Willenhall

Day trip to the Black Country to visit various pubs around Walsall and Willenhall.

£10 Deposit reserves a seat on the minibus.

Contact Matthew Bullock:
theoxforddrinker@yahoo.co.uk

Thu 5th May to Sun 8th May

Amsterdam Beer Jolly

Amsterdam

For more info contact Dave Cogdell at
David@cogdell.fsbusiness.co.uk

Fri 15th April to Sun 17th April

CAMRA Members Weekend and AGM 2011

Octagon Centre, University of Sheffield

<http://www.camra.org.uk/agm>



For more details about social events including public transport information please


check the web site at
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/diary, email
social@oxfordcamra.org.uk or join our mailing list at
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists

For branch meeting details contact Steve Lawrence at
contact@oxfordcamra.org.uk

Beer Festival Diary



Thu 3rd - Sat 5th February

 **Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival**
George Watson Memorial Hall, Barton Street, Tewkesbury
72 beers plus ciders & perries
www.tewkesburycamra.org.uk

Thu 3rd - Sat 5th February

Dun Cow Winter Ales Festival
West End, Hornton, nr Banbury
01295 670524

Thu 3rd - Sun 6th February

1st Winter Beer Festival
Kings Head & Bell, E. St. Helen's Street, Abingdon
Selection of Oxfordshire's finest winter ales, stouts and milds. Live bands, and more.

Fri 4th - Sat 5th February

Merton Beer Festival
Merton Village Hall, Islip Road, Merton, Nr Bicester
www.mertonbeerfestival.co.uk

Fri 4th - Sat 5th February

 **Redditch Winter Ale Festival**
Rocklands Social Club
Birchfield Road, Redditch
30 beers plus cider & perry
www.redditchwaf.org.uk

Wed 9th - Fri 11th February

 **21st Battersea Beer Festival**
BAC Grand Hall, Lavender Hill, Battersea, London
www.swlcamra.org.uk


Fri 18th - Sun 20th February

Beer and Sausage Festival
Cricketers Arms, Littleworth
01865 872738
www.cricketers-arms.co.uk

Sat 5th - Sun 6th March

DERT 2011
Oxford
A pub crawl with swords! The annual world rapper sword dancing competition takes place in pubs, the natural habitat of rapper dancers.
www.dert2011.co.uk

Wed 9th - Fri 11th March

 **27th London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival**
Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London (opposite St. Pancras Station)
70+ beers, plus ciders, perries & imported beers
www.camranorthlondon.org.uk

Tue 15th - Sat 19th March

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

Fri 18th - Sat 19th March

 **Bristol Beer Festival**
Brunel Passenger Shed, Temple Meads Station, Bristol, BS1 6QF
30 beers, plus 40 ciders & perries
Entry by ticket only - see website
www.camrabristol.org.uk

Fri 25th - Sun 27th March

Blues, Brews & Jazz Festival
Brewery Tap, 40-42 Ock Street, Abingdon, OX14 5BZ
Featuring CAMRA Champion Ales, LocAle Ales, Craft Ciders, Speciality Sausages, Live Music:


Fri 1st April to Sun 3rd April

Broad Face Beer Festival
30-32 Bridge Street, Abingdon, OX14 3HR
Great Selection of the best local real ales and ciders, a selection of wine and local cheeses, plus a weekend of live entertainment.

Sat 9th April to Tue 12th April

Far From the Madding Crowd Cider Festival
Friars Entry, Oxford
Selection of real ciders and perries.

Thu 5th May to Sat 7th May

 **Banbury Beer Festival**
Territorial Army Centre, Oxford Road, Banbury
OX16 9AN
www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk

Sat 9th July, 11am-10pm

14th Charlbury Beer Festival
Charlbury Cricket Club

Tue 2nd August to Sat 6th August

 **CAMRA Great British Beer Festival 2011**
Earls Court, London

Britain's biggest beer festival, once again brings together a wide range of real ales, ciders, perries and international beers.

There's plenty to occupy you at the festival, you can play on some traditional pub games, enjoy live music, sample some food, including good traditional pub snacks, and also attend tutored beer tastings.

2010 was another record-breaking year for the Great British Beer Festival and we were delighted to announce an increase of almost 5% in attendance figures on 2009's festival, making it our biggest ever.

<http://gbbf.camra.org.uk/home>

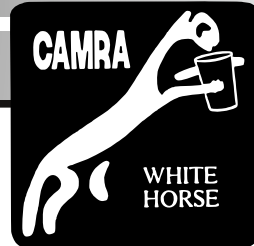


Up-to-date information about beer festivals can be found on the Oxford CAMRA web site at:

<http://oxfordcamra.org.uk/festivals>

This page lists dates and other information about local beer festivals which we are aware of in the coming months. The branch is always happy to help with publicising events which promote real ales and/or real ciders; note however that these festivals are not run or officially endorsed by CAMRA, unless stated in the description.

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.

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.

Our Website



Visit our website, 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.

Wantage Beer Festival goes from strength to strength

Harry Hudson

The 2010 Wantage Beer Festival in November once again attracted hundreds of real ale drinkers and proved a resounding success. Branch chairman Neil Crook said, 'We are pleased that, even with the change of venue, we were able to promote both real and local ales to existing members, while bringing more people into the campaign.'

The event moved to the Comrades Club, not far from the town centre. Although the branch had held two successful and well-attended festivals at the central Masonic Hall, the new venue was chosen as it offered more space and an extensive seating area adjoining the stillage. The event was again sponsored by Peter Fowler (Shoulder of Mutton) and Paul Hexter (Royal Oak).

Over the two days, attendance was calculated at 525 visitors, with 16 new members signed up to the campaign. There were 30 beers available, plus 5 ciders and 1 perry. Beer and cider consumed was nearly 250 gallons, 88.5% of the total.

The beers on offer, which were predominantly locales, ranged in strength from 3.6% to 9% ABV. Of particular interest were a rare appearance of 'the Bitterest bitter in the world - The Hop by Pitstop' and the first outing of the first brew from the new Faringdon Brewery, based at the Swan pub - Folly Pride (4.1%).

The first beer to sell out was the ever-popular Ridgeway Blue, and the Beer of the Festival, voted for by visitors, was Old Bog Monstrous Mild, with Old Forge Hammer & Tongs a close runner-up. Donations and unused beer tokens raised £118 for June's Kidney appeal.

Branch chairman Neil Crook added: 'This was another successful event for White Horse Branch, which raised the Campaign's profile in our area. Although we are one of the smaller branches in the region, we have an active and committed membership. We look forward to seeing new members at our regular branch events, and I'm very grateful to all those helpers, both from our branch and neighbouring branches, who once again pitched in, and gave up hours of their time voluntarily to help make the event such a success.'

Diary Of Events

Saturday 12th February, 2pm

Joint Social with Oxford Branch
Brewery Visit to Loose Cannon - 6 Suffolk Way, Abingdon .OX14 5JX
Meet at the Brewery, followed by a Pub Crawl around "Abingdon"

Tuesday 15th February, 7:45pm

Branch Meeting at Royal Oak, Wantage
Including Good Beer Guide 2012 selection.

Saturday 5th March, 4pm

Beer of the festival presentation at Mason's Arms, Headington

Tuesday 15th March, 7:30pm

Branch Meeting and AGM at North Star, Steventon

THE WEST BERKSHIRE BREWERY

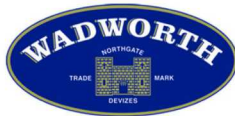
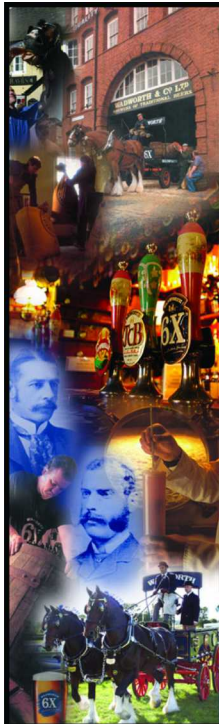
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**Wadworth & Co Ltd, Northgate Brewery, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1JW.
www.wadworth.co.uk**

The Shoulder of Mutton

John Rees



The 'Mutton', situated in Wallingford Street, Wantage, has been a popular local boozer since the 1820's. During that time it has been serving up probably some of the best kept beer in Wantage, resulting in it being voted white Horse Branch Pub Of The Year in 2006.

Traditionally known as an 'old mans pub' but if you wanted a tradesman then just drop into the 'Mutton' on a Friday afternoon and the best of the best would be there. However, originally a Morlands house and subsequently after the take over a Greene King establishment, the Mutton was sold to the Admiral Group. Being more interested in rent than ale it became more difficult for the landlords to make a living with the beer ties imposed; so after the valiant efforts of Meeko and subsequently Wayne, the 'Shoulder of Mutton' was about to call time permanently.

A knight in shining armour was required to save the Mutton from being turned into housing... but what turns up? Peter Fowler, a guy who's never run a pub in his life! He does have a few credentials in so far as he can brew a half decent pint of beer having won best beer in the inaugural Wantage Beer Festival going on to win best beer at the Ascot Beer Festival for the last two years and numerous other awards with Pitstop Brewery. Being a good brewer does not mean that you make a good landlord and can run a successful pub. Lyn, who has been the mainstay of the Mutton for over 20 years agreed to continue, without whom, he should have shut up shop before starting.

Since moving in around three months ago,

Peter Fowler has put his money where his mouth is and set about rejuvenating the Mutton. The first job was to get rid of the chocolate brown (being polite) paint work and lightening everything up. Having made the surroundings more welcoming then the



Peter Fowler

important part... what beers? The main difference now is 'No Beer Tie'. At this time there are three pumps which change probably every 2 days due to the popularity and quality of the beers, but by the time this goes to print there will probably be six pumps. It is just a matter of extending into a cellar recently found under the building. Peter is an advocate of 'locale' but is not averse to importing from further afield due to requests, usually from CAMRA members.

Peter has converted an outbuilding into a function room which can incorporate a stillage, putting an extra 8 beers on tap. This was used to unanimous acclaim for our branch Christmas social.

Due to the economic climate and the fact that it is difficult to make a living out of wet sales alone, Peter has invested in high class en-suite bedrooms for those who live further afield and would still like to sample the market town experience and local food, and especially local ales. Peter is also looking to provide food again based on local produce to match the local beers, 'But, fear not,' says Peter, 'the 'Mutton' will always firstly be a beer oriented pub!'. Loyalty cards are given out; 'one over the eight' buy 8, next one free!

A new brewery should be installed around February? New name, same guys, same quality! Watch this space.

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Please contact 001 Taxis, New Inn Yard, 108 St. Aldates, Oxford

North Oxford Drinker's Journey



Tony Goulding

This drinker's journey through North Oxford will include every pub north of the city with the exception of Wolvercote which will be the subject of a future story.

We now start a journey around those pubs open for drinks starting with the **Dancing Dragon**, formerly The Kings Arms on Banbury Road where the one handpump was turned around unused. Do people really want to drink real beer in a chinese cafe bar? A short walk down the road, **The Dewdrop Inn** built in 1888 with the small front bar serving as a grocery shop until 1900 looms into view. This Spirit Group (formed from the ashes of Courage) pub is very popular with a pleasant and spacious two bar layout. 3 beers are served always in good condition, usually **Courage Best** (just an ordinary beer these days), **Timothy Taylor Landlord** and **Hook Norton Bitter** along with well recommended good pub food. Do not pass by... use the only local on the Banbury Road!

Walking down the road towards town the upmarket North Parade hides two not-to-be-missed pubs. **The Rose and Crown** has one of, if not the top landlords for good manners in Oxford, Andrew. Enough has been said by myself about this pub (one of my top 5 pubs in the city), but I will remind you that 4 beers are available; **Shotover Scholar**, **Hook Norton Old Hooky**, **Adnams Southwold Bitter** and a guest which at the time was **Wychwood January Sale**. Don't forget the quality food in a wonderful bad language and mobile phone free atmosphere.

Across the road is the equally inviting locals local boozier, **The Gardeners Arms**, very well run by Dave and Jenny. This Greene King house serves well kept **IPA** and two guest beers along with good quality fresh food in very comfortable surroundings. Both these pubs built in the 1870s are worth a night's drinking, but beware... bring a fat wallet!

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Walking past and across the Woodstock Road you will find down the narrow Plantation Rd another **Gardeners Arms**; another very popular and well run Jericho pub. Serving 4 quality beers from The Marstons range including **Brakspears Bitter** and others from Wychwood, Ringwood or Jennings along with the best vegetarian food in Oxford. This is another 19th century pub not to be missed.

The 2 pubs at the far end of Walton St did not disappoint with **The Anchor** built 1700 and rebuilt 1937 looking every bit the attractive 2 roomed large cornerhouse pub it is. Now run by Wadworths and serving 4 beers from their range including **Henrys IPA** and **Old Timer**, this comfortable and spacious pub serves good quality food in quality surroundings.

Well worth the walk and back is **The Victoria**. run by Banks and now Marstons. Built in 1840 and once again serving good quality pub grub along with **Banks Bitter** along with a Marstons guest beer, the Victoria must have one of the most stunning upper balcony floors of any pub in the city.

Getting on yer bike, the last of the pubs in this area is almost back in the city. **The Royal Oak** is another quality pub this time run by M+B the old Mitchells and Butlers. Serving **Brakspears Bitter** along with 2 guest beers and again good pub food this multi roomed and very popular pub built in 1861 is not to be missed (I have never heard any one complain about the Oak).

I dont think on this survey that I found a bad pub; they were all worth a visit. Apologies for some of the scant words about the various pubs, but I enjoyed the visits more than the write ups.

If you find mistakes or you can add info about any of the city pubs then please contact the local branch.

Remember public enemy no 1... the Supermarkets. Use your local pubs or lose them .

Contact Tony Goulding by email:
pubs-officer@oxfordcamra.org.uk
01865 461196

North Oxford Pub Closures

Twenty years ago the North Oxford area boasted 20 pubs. At the time of this article (Xmas / New year) only 11 are trading along with 1 being auctioned. This is a staggering almost 50 PER CENT cull without equal in Oxfordshire and most of the Country .

Those closed include:

- **The Friar Bacon** along the eastern bypass; built 1934, demolished in the 90s and now a block of flats.
- Half a mile away on the banks of the river Cherwell was the 1895 build and 1978 rebuild now demolished to make way for more flats, **The Cherwell**.
- Near Summertown on the Banbury Road was the elegant and respectable looking **Kings Arms** built 1824 and rebuilt 1978 finally being converted into **The Dancing Dragon** Chinese cafe in 2006.

The Woodstock Road has suffered dreadfully with only 1 pub left out of 4:

- **The Woodstock Arms** built 1850 with the town of Woodstock's coat of arms as the pub sign was only recently demolished awaiting a property developers whim.
- Almost next door was **The Red Lion** built in 1932 and lost in 1990 to become a restaurant.
- Nearer to the city, **The Horse and Jockey** was built in 1880 and leased by St John's College to Morrells Brewery on a 99 year lease in 1899. Predictably at the end of the lease the pub was converted to student accomodation.

In Jericho itself:

- **The Globe** built in 1850 and rebuilt in 1934 was a good example of a basic locals boozier stolen in 2008 from the local community by another developer and is now a private house.
- Around the corner **The Carpenters Arms** was built in 1860 in a row of old 2 up 2 down town houses; a cosy Jericho local which was closed in the 90s and is now a private business.
- Also in Jericho is **The Radcliffe Arms** built in 1846 now closed to be auctioned and maybe reopened by a local brewery.

A Christmas Story in Jericho



Martyn Sanders

And so it came to pass that the five wise men of Kidlington had heard of a miracle and despite no bright star to guide them they set out on their journey.

It was a cold, clear night as their ship of the desert, actually Oxford Bus Company fleet number 227, appeared and they began their trek. Probably noisier than a camel, due to a rattling air-con panel in the roof, it nevertheless bore us safely until we alighted at Bevington Road.

A brisk walk and we were soon entering the warmth of the **Jericho Tavern** (formerly Halls 'Jericho House') in Walton Street. It was very busy with a buzz created by several groups of people enjoying the evening; if there was any music we couldn't hear it! The staff were friendly and engaging as was our selected beer which was **Sharps 'Abbey Christmas'** (4.6) which we all rated as excellent and was full of Christmas flavours. One of our party tried the cask **Worthington 'White Shield'** (5.6) but was actually disappointed with the flavour.

We escaped again into the night air but were soon entering '**Jude the Obscure**' (formerly Morrells 'Prince of Wales') which is a little further along Walton Street towards Oxford. Here again we found a busy/bustling atmosphere with a background accompaniment of 'mixed' music. We all opted for Greene Kings '**Fireside**' (4.5) as **Morland 'Original'** didn't appeal and the '**Olde Trip**' had gone. '**Fireside**' proved to be a good choice as although lacking the depth of taste of 'Abbey Christmas' was, nevertheless enjoyable. Eventually our position toward the rear of the pub became uncomfortable due to the under seat heating which was doing a fairly good job of gently cooking us!

A walk down into the heart of Jericho, past the now closed '**Radcliffe Arms**', and we entered the '**Bookbinders Arms**'. This is a former Oxford City 'Pub of the Year' so we expected good things. It was much quieter than any of the previous pubs with two or three small

groups dotted about and some undeterminable music gently drifting through. However, there was a good selection of beer including **Hardys & Hansons 'Rocking Rudolph'** (4.2) and '**Olde Trip**' (4.3), **Hydes 'Jekyll's Gold'** (4.3), '**Old Speckled Hen**' (4.5) and **Greene King 'St Edmunds'**. Given the season that was upon us, we elected for the 'Rudolph' which was very acceptable. The bottled Aspels '**Suffolk Cider**' (6.2) was also sampled but at £3.85 consumption was limited! A notice showing that the 'Bookbinders' would be closed on December 23/24/25 and New Years Day did give some cause for concern, surely these would be viable trading days?!

Once more we pressed on and then it came into sight; would there be room at the inn for these weary travellers? '**The Harcourt Arms**' (Fullers) is an oasis of calm and very welcoming on a cold winters night. There was room at the inn and with fires burning in the hearths, we stepped into the subdued lighting of its interior and a bright light seemed to shine above the bar. This could of course have been our imagination but, as the five wise men looked down, their eyes beheld a beautiful sight, yes, **Fullers London Porter** (5.4) on draught! The landlord (a man who has served the trade since 1966 so knows a good pint when he pours it!) happily pulled us pints of this superb ale but we have to admit that it required nearly all our gold, frankincense and myrrh to pay for it! The Fullers range of '**Chiswick**', '**London Pride**', '**ESB**' and '**Discovery**' was also available but we were more than happy with our Porter!

All too soon we bid the landlord farewell and headed back to Kidlington. The warmth of the 'Harcourt Arms' was soon forgotten as we dubbed our bus home 'The Polar Express' due to the air conditioning pumping out cold air when the outside temperature was already well below freezing!

The evening had been enjoyed by all and is well worth considering if you happen to be Jericho way, at any time of the year.



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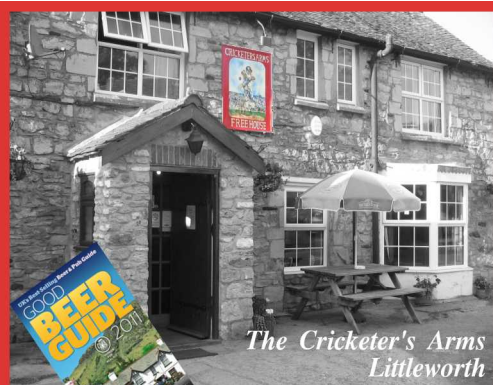
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Lost Jericho Pubs

Jericho was once a thriving, self-contained, community in its own right supporting many small businesses and pubs including the following, all of which are now but memories;

- **'The Globe'** (Morrells) on the corner of Allam St and Cranham St,
- **'White House'** (Halls) on the corner of Albert St and Cardigan St,
- **'Bird in Hand'** (Halls) on King St,
- **'The Fountain'** (Morrells),
- **'Bakers Arms'** (Halls) and **'The Crown'** (Halls) on Cardigan St,
- **'Plough & Anchor'** (Halls) and **'The Union'** (Halls) on Great Clarendon St,
- **'The Duke of Wellington'** (Halls) on Wellington St,
- **'The New Inn'** (Halls) on the corner of Wellington St and Canal St
- **'Carpenters Arms'** (Morrells) on Nelson St.



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Far from the Madding Crowd Winter Ale Festival



Ben Lay

The early Christmas present for the beer-drinkers of Oxford is always the Winter Ale Festival at the Far from the Madding Crowd, and this year proved no exception. Starting on the 14th of December, the festival included over thirty different real ales, as well as real cider and perry, and, as ever, both regulars and occasional visitors flocked to the pub to sample the wide range of beer on offer.

Highlights with the hop-fiends amongst the throng were the *Hophead* and *American Pale Ale*, both from the Dark Star Brewery, while fans of dark beer were drawn especially to the *O' Hanlon's Port Stout*. Several Christmas-themed beers also featured in the selection, and the most popular of these were the Cairngorm Brewery's *Santa's Sledgehammer*, a very easy drink for its rather potent 5.6% ABV, the Old Bear Brewery's *Christmas Pudding*, and Salopian's *Firkin Freezin'*, making a return appearance to the Winter Ale Festival and proving just as popular, if just as tricky in the ordering, as it had done in previous years.

Unfortunately snow stopped play for most of the weekend, with both staff and drinkers hampered by the wintry weather, but nevertheless a concerted effort was made to open over Sunday lunchtime to keep the ale flowing, and normal service resumed on the Monday, ensuring a continued supply of festival beers into the following week.

"We are very proud of our festivals here," commented David Patalong, manager of the freehouse. "We always strive to keep a good variety and quality of real ale on offer, and the four festivals each year are the best examples of this endeavour. We have one of the smallest cellars in Oxford, but I take as my watchword the motto inscribed on Oakham's White Dwarf, 'Multum in Parvo': 'Much in Little'."

The beer festivals are a regular fixture on the calendar at the Madding Crowd, and the next will be the Spring Ale Festival from the 22nd to the 26th of March. Following the success of the pub's first Cider Festival at the end of October, these too will join the regular cycle of special events at the pub, the next one scheduled for the 9th to the 12th of April.



Shaun McGonigal, Bar Supervisor
Photograph by Vivien Senior

Plot 16 Beer Launch

Robert Mitchell

On the 17th of December I went to the launch of the Plot 16 beer brewed by Shotover Brewery at the Modern Art in Oxford. My main reason for visiting was to try the beer as none had been available at the brewery itself when I and other Oxford CAMRA members visited in November. The beer tasted good and the beer label artwork is of green foliage. Each bottle cost £3.50 and talking to the brewer only a thousand bottles were available and could only be purchased at the Modern Art in Oxford. There was a laptop set up with slides showing how the beer was made and produced. There was a short speech by the Director of Modern Art Oxford and live music downstairs. You could also have your bottled signed by the artist which I did.

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

As I sit here putting pen to paper (or more accurately fingers to keyboard) I realise life is pretty good. You see for my first regular article I'm trying to write a bit about me and what I do, and I've just realised how lucky I am.



In life I've never really been into fast cars, stamp collecting, the latest gadget or computer games; instead as a child I was into bicycles. I'd ride them anywhere and everywhere, going up and down, taking them apart and upgrading or replacing bust parts whenever I had made enough cash from car washing or the paper round; yep life was pretty sweet. Later on in life I discovered the wonders and joys of beer, which again took me anywhere and everywhere, up and down, and round and round.

Dave Barry once said *"Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza."*

It may be true that the wheel does not go well with pizza but for me the wheel and beer are the perfect partners in crime.

I've lived in Oxfordshire for many years, I currently live in Oxford, but grew up in a village near Wantage called Grove. Today I co-own and run two bicycle companies in Oxford; Walton Street Cycles and Bainton Bikes. Just last year I took over the running of Walton Street Cycles, (which I spent hours in as a child) that specialises in high quality bikes, components / accessories and top notch repairs; you may think me biased but I've never met as many knowledgeable and skilled mechanics as the boys working in our workshop; there is literally nothing they cannot fix. Walton Street Cycles has been running since 1975, and today we ensure the shop runs with the same tradition and ethos that gained its reputation all those years ago.

Our other company is Bainton Bikes, which we recently created (late 2009). Bainton Bikes was inspired one night over a pint, when my

girlfriend (Honour) and I realised what a bloody good idea setting up a specialist bicycle hire business in Oxford would be. The idea was simple we'd build up a fleet of bikes and offer a personal service where anyone visiting Oxford or Oxfordshire could hire a bike at a reasonable price and get around in the best way; by bike. In addition to hiring the bikes we'd also offer bicycle tours of the surrounding area, offering the best sights and stops the city has to offer.

Wanting to keep prices down and have no debt we decided the best way to go forward was to operate from home, transforming the garage into a workshop and the garden into a secure sheltered bicycle storage; who likes cutting the grass anyway?

So we started building bikes, having the frames specially powder coated by a local firm and then assembling the bikes in our converted garage / workshop. We are now the proud owners of over 80 hire bikes with the number increasing daily. Today we are lucky enough to be able to store and maintain the hire fleet through our Walton Street Cycles workshop; you'd be amazed how much space 80 bikes takes up in your garden.

But what has all of this got to do with beer you may wonder? Bugger all really; I'm getting to that bit, but hopefully I've sufficiently introduced myself; I love beer and bikes.

There are some fantastic pubs in and around Oxfordshire, and it is my intention in my articles to share with you our favourite pub tour rides around the county. Each article will contain details of the route we take, the difficulty of the route, the recommended bike for the route, how many miles it is, the pubs we stop at, the beers we try, the food scoffed, cycle parking facilities, things to look out for and essential equipment to take.

So, for now that's it from me, the next issue of the Oxford drinker will contain my latest article detailing a bike and beer lovers ride.

These are regular fun rides we run and if you are interested in joining us then please contact me on info@baintonbikes.com.

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Government green light for supermarkets to keep selling booze at pocket-money prices



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale has expressed regret at the Government's failure to ban the sale of alcohol below cost. The Government are instead banning the sale of alcohol at below excise duty and VAT which is just 47p a pint. This will have virtually no impact on the rock-bottom prices of beer in supermarkets and will do nothing to alleviate the pressure on pubs where the price of a pint is rapidly approaching £3.

CAMRA has long been campaigning for a ban on below cost sales of alcohol, which was a clear manifesto commitment of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. However, for any ban to have a meaningful impact it is vital that the cost of alcohol production is factored in, which for beer will produce a floor price of around 40p a unit – double what is being proposed.

Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive said: "Today's decision means pubs will continue to

close as they are undercut by supermarkets selling canned beers at pocket money prices. A ban on selling beer at below duty plus VAT will have a negligible impact as supermarkets sell only a tiny proportion of beer at below these levels."

"CAMRA believes a floor price of around 40 pence a unit would be required to prevent supermarkets selling alcohol at a loss. The Government's decision to set a floor price of only 21 pence a unit is a betrayal of their previous promise to ban the sale of alcohol at below cost and means supermarkets will continue to be able to sell alcohol as a loss leader."

"It is a blow to pub goers that with pub prices approaching £3 a pint the Government have decided to give the green light to the supermarkets to charge as little as 47 pence a pint."

"The Government appear all too ready to impose higher costs and regulations on well-run community pubs but are prepared to turn a blind eye to the irresponsible attitude towards alcohol expressed by the supermarkets."

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