



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**



ISSUE 70  
Oct-Nov 2011

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# the Oxford Drinker

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

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

This newsletter is also available electronically in PDF format at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/drinker)

Valuable contributions to this edition have been made by Matt Bullock, Neil Hoggarth, Richard Queralt, Lawrence Harman, Dave Richardson, Dave Cogdell, Helene Augar and others.

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

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

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

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We will send you as many issues as you send envelopes.

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## Welcome to the October-November 2011 edition of The Oxford Drinker.

In the last issue the editors sent out a plea for help to produce the Oxford Drinker. Several people offered to help including Dave Richardson, a freelance journalist. We welcome him to the Oxford Drinker and hope to keep the Drinker going for a while yet.

Preparations for the Oxford Beer Festival are in full swing with an impressive line up of beer and cider! To ensure beer is still available on Saturday, forty barrels are being kept in a separate bar. To support our Local Breweries a blind tasting session will find the Champion LocAle Beer of the Festival.

The tasting panel consists of local publicans, brewers, members of CAMRA and The Oxford Brewers Group.

- Steven & JoHanne

## Keeping In Touch

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# Oxford CAMRA AGM Report



Stephen Lawrence, Branch Secretary

The 2011 AGM of the Oxford Branch was held in the front room of the King's Arms in Holywell Street in Oxford on 14 September with about 35 members present.

There were reports from some of the officers for the previous year; the Chair, Neil Hoggarth, Secretary, Steve Lawrence, and Membership Secretary, Helen Augar. All covered various aspects of another successful year with monthly branch meetings, committee meetings where we had set branch objectives for the first time and produced a guide to all the pubs in the branch area (printing imminent), and steady rise in membership with the total for the branch at 819 now. The Treasurer, Dave Cogdell, presented the accounts for 2010/11, the main feature being the 2010 Oxford Beer Festival which had been a great success thanks to everyone's hard work and enabled us to pass £5,000 over to CAMRA HQ.

Neil felt that there were still areas for the branch to develop. We could be more organised in fighting the pub closures that were coming up with depressing frequency and there was still scope for more volunteers to get involved which would ease the burden on the committee, especially with regard to the, very successful, Oxford Drinker.

The election of officers took place with Regional Director, Sandie Gill in the chair. Neil Hoggarth was elected Chair and Dennis Brown Vice Chair. Steve Lawrence, Secretary; Dave Cogdell, Treasurer; Jon Franklin, Membership secretary; Tony Golding, Pubs Officer and Press and Publicity Officer; Steven Green, Social Secretary; Robert Mitchell, Branch Younger Persons Contact; Will Reed, Public Affairs Officer; and JoHanne and Steven Green, Editors of Oxford Drinker were all elected unopposed.

Sandie Gill addressed the meeting saying how impressed she was with the turnout and the meeting closed with some heartfelt discussion about CAMRA policy.

Even if you are not a member you can come along to the monthly meetings so check the diary and come along. You will be very welcome.

Steve Lawrence  
Secretary, Oxford Branch CAMRA  
September 2011

## Presentation for Oxford Beer Festival Logo Design Competition Winners

Helene Augar

A group of branch members met up at the Wychwood Brewery in Witney to present the winners of the logo competition with their certificates and prizes (10 cases of beer for the first place winner, 3 cases for second place and 2 cases for third) on Saturday 24 September 2011.



The Group enjoyed some samples of the Brakspear and Wychwood beers, followed by a guided tour of the brewery. Alan Studholme, the first

place winner and Matthew Scroggs, the third place winner attended to receive their awards. Unfortunately the second place winner, Andrew Smith, had to work so could not join us, but we were assured he would be able to collect his prize from the brewery the following day! The branch would like to thank Brakspear for their warm hospitality and generous donations of the prizes for the three winning entries.



From left to right: Alison Butler (Brakspear Brand Manager), Matthew Scroggs (3rd place), Alan Studholme (winner), Helene Augar (Oxford CAMRA).



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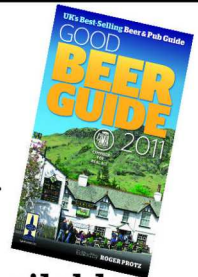
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## Oxford

**Octoberfest 2011**, Oxford's only collaborative beer festival in aid of Sobell House Hospice is being held from Thursday 20th to Sunday 24th October. Pubs in Oxford's West End; **The Honey Pot**, **Dukes Cut**, **Jam factory**, **Cafe Coco Royale** and **The Oxford Retreat** will be offering a wide range of cask ales, craft lagers, ciders and delicious local foods as well as providing live music and entertainment throughout the 4-day festival. Last year's event proved to be a fantastic way to bring the community together in raising money for a great local charity whilst showcasing all that is great about the licensed trade. Buy a wristband for £5 (all proceeds to Sobell House), have a drink in each of the 5 venues and get yourself a commemorative T-shirt.

**Duke's Cut, Park End Street**: Regulars may have noticed things have been shaking up on the music front! With the arrival of the fantastic band Breeze playing live every Friday night and the launch of Battle of The Bands (in aid of Helen & Douglas House) on Tuesday nights, this is proving to be the place to check out both up and coming and professional bands on the music scene. Of course having a 3-hour Happy Hour (with **Hobgoblin** at £2 a pint) running every Monday to Friday doesn't hurt much either!

**O'Neill's on George Street** re-opened on 23rd September, re-branded "O'Neill's Irish Pub and Kitchen". It has been thoroughly refurbished and looks very smart. There are three hand pumps with extravagantly large swan-necks at the front of the bar; Beers are **Sharp's Doom Bar**, **Brakspear's Oxford Gold** and **Purity's Pure Ubu**.

**The Cricketers Arms on Iffley Road** in East Oxford closed in late July, when the previous tenants returned the keys to Greene King. The good news is that the pub reopened in mid-September. The new tenants are Tim and Claire, and they have plans to put on a wide range of activities in the pub including improv theatre, poetry, magic and illusion acts, comedy, acoustic music and open mic. They are running a karaoke night on Sunday evenings. The beers on sale initially are **Greene King St Edmunds** and **Old Speckled Hen**, and they hope to offer guest beers too once trade picks up.

**Rose and Crown, North Parade** has doubled the CAMRA member discount on their regular beers to 20p off a pint and 10p off a half pint between Sunday and Thursday. Regular ales include **Adnams Southwold**, **Shotover Scholar**, and **Hook Norton Old Hooky**. The fourth hand pump is reserved for guest beers, and are not included in the offer.

**James Street Tavern off Cowley Road**, has re-opened under the management of Lisa Jaskulla, who is also manager of the **Half Moon** in St Clement's. She wants to create a community pub, which will focus on real ales, pub grub, families and locals. The pub has a country pub feel and will serve three Greene King ales and three from other producers within a 50-mile radius. There will also be music in the evenings.

## Villages

**The Swan Inn, Islip** was closed for a few weeks in the summer after the landlord left. It was then taken over by Mark Franklin who also runs **the Crown** at Charlton on Otmoor and after minor refurbishment was reopened with Adam Cooke as manager. It is a Greene-King house but Adam has permission to obtain a beer from outside of their supply. At the moment his two real ales are **Greene-King IPA** and a local guest from a brewery such as **Hook Norton, Vale** or **Silverstone**.

**The Five Alls at Filkins**, near Lechlade re-opened in early August after a period of closure, and following a substantial refurbishment. This Brakspear pub is run by manager Manoli Gonzalez and head chef and proprietor Duncan Ray; there are four beers available, two from **Brakspear** and, at busy times, two others chosen from the Marston's portfolio.

## Abingdon

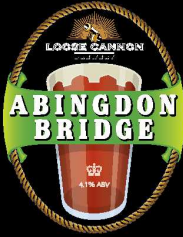
**The Brewery Tap** is undergoing refurbishment and improvements. A new lease was signed recently, so Matt and JD have decided to invest in their pub. During October and November, the toilets are being completely renovated, the yard is going to be landscaped, all of the bar areas are to receive new furnishings and a new Tap larder is being created behind the bar servery.

October 7th-9th, the Tap held a big beer, cider & sausage festival in a double top hat marque in the pub car park to commemorate 20 years since the **Mr Warrick's Arms** pub shut. Keith and Marilyn Heritage were the licensees and soon after opened The Brewery Tap, but the pub will be remembered more for the 'Duchess of Ock Street', Mrs Heavens, who had run the pub for close to sixty years!

**The Boundary House** is serving Speckled Hen, in excellent condition, for only £2.50 a pint.

New tenants have taken over the **Old Anchor** and are continuing to keep their ale in excellent condition; they have plans for a refurbishment soon.

**The White Horse** has also been undergoing refurbishment recently.

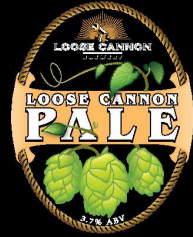


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**THURS 20TH - SAT 23RD OCTOBER 2011**

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Sponsored by Brakspear - The Oxfordshire Beer

# Brewery News



## Oxfordshire Ales

The Oxfordshire Ales brewery is on the outskirts of the village of Marsh Gibbon on the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire borders.

Oxford CAMRA visited the Brewery on 28th July, where they were shown around by head brewer Steve Goryll. Oxfordshire Ales have their own bottling machine, and one of the highlights of the visit was a demonstration of how each stage of the bottling machine worked.

The brewery opened in 2004 as a 5 barrel brewery, and was expanded to 15 barrels in 2009. You can see where the boiler has been welded to increase its capacity. Rather unusually, Oxfordshire Ales brew with their own spring water, historically known for its healing properties, from the Marsh Gibbon village spring at Stump Well. They use traditional floor malt from Warminster, who are Britain's oldest floor maltings.



Oxfordshire Ales recently won two medals in the British Bottlers Institute Awards 2011, an award scheme that is judged by blind tasting by a number of industry experts.

A gold medal went to **Pride of Oxford**, which is brewed to appeal to the younger drinker as a thirst-quenching alternative to lager. It gives a biscuity, fruity character and vibrant juicy refreshment.

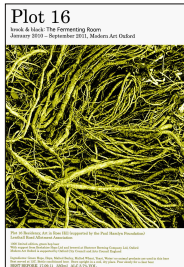


A silver medal went to **Churchill IPA**, brewed in association with Churchill Heritage, the ale is a tribute to one of the World's greatest statesmen, political thinkers and orators. Churchill IPA is brewed with natural mineral water from Blenheim Palace – Sir Winston's birthplace and gives a citrus-fruit malt, spicy hops and a moreish thirst-quenching edge.

## Brewing as Art – Plot 16

Hops from a modern art installation at Plot 16 of Lenthall Road allotments in Rose Hill have been harvested for the last time for a special "Plot 16" beer brewed by The Shotover Brewing Company.

The project, 'The Fermenting Room: Return of the Rhizome' is the work of brook & black, resident artists at Modern Art Oxford. It involved hops growing over a sculpture reflecting the architecture of Modern Art Oxford in Pembroke Street, built in 1892 as Hanley's City Brewery overlaid with the unpredictable energy of plant growth.



Last year most of the hops were destroyed by fire but there were enough to dry hop a batch of Prospect Ale with fresh green fuggles from plot 16 which still produced a striking beer.

This year they have been able to design a special beer for the project and the 2011 Plot 16 beer is an authentic India Pale Ale at about 6%ABV and made entirely with Oxfordshire hops.

The 800 litre brew had an astonishing 18kg of hops added to the copper in multiple stages including about 8kg of fresh green fuggles from Plot 16. Only 1800 bottles will be produced with about half going to Modern Art Oxford in Pembroke St. and the rest to be sold by the brewery.



"It is a beer for laying down and probably needs a 'do not drink before' date rather than a 'best before' date" said Ed Murray from Shotover Brewery.



**The Kings Head & Bell**  
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**Kings Head & Bell, Abingdon**

The Kings Head & Bell 2nd annual summer beer festival took place over the August Bank Holiday weekend. There were 24 beers available including offerings from Box Steam, Three Castles, Andwell, Red Squirrel, Butts and Sadlers breweries alongside many locally produced ales. Cider drinkers were catered for with 5 Westons ciders from Herefordshire including a fruity Raspberry Twist.

The event was sponsored by the Hook Norton brewery which supplies the pub with many of its ales and on this occasion sent their shire horses and dray to promote the event.



**CAMRA LOCAP** Oxford CAMRA branch presented Steve Hipgrave, manager of the King's Head and Bell with a certificate of LocAle accreditation.

The pub endeavours to always sell at least one locally-brewed beer which often includes beer from Hook Norton and Abingdon's own Loose Cannon brewery.



# Abingdon Cross Keys First Beer Festival



The **Cross Keys** in Abingdon's Ock Street held its first beer and music Festival in September. In the past the Keys rarely featured in the Drinker as it is a sports orientated pub with a largely lager drinking clientele, however since the present tenants, Roland & Chris, took over a few years ago real ale is becoming a feature in the pub. There are now three dispensers serving real ale and they offer a 20p discount to Camra members. The Keys is a Green King pub and the beers come from that stable but are invariably kept well with regularly changing guests.

So it was natural progression for the Keys to stage its first beer festival, there were 8 barrels of beer and 2 scrumpy ciders set up on the new patio garden and a further 3 festival ales on tap inside the pub. The selection was varied and some unusual for our area. The Wolf Brewery "**Battle of**



**Britain,"** Oxfordshire Brewery "**Happy Hooker,"** Bays "**Devon Dumpling,"** were all excellent session bitters with distinct flavours. The Loddon Brewery had 2 offerings, "**Russet Bitter**" – a rich smooth aromatic beer an "**In Yer Face American IPA**" a very

strong (6%) bitter brewed with toasted malt, with a fruity and spicy aftertaste – delicious but is it an IPA? The White Horse "**Black Horse Porter**" and the Wentworth "**Vanilla Stout**" were in terrific form and much praised by all.

The festival featured some excellent blues, rock and pop music in the evenings, and on Saturday afternoon we were treated to an impromptu jam session from the Abingdon Morris Team musicians and friends, which along with the ales went down extremely well.

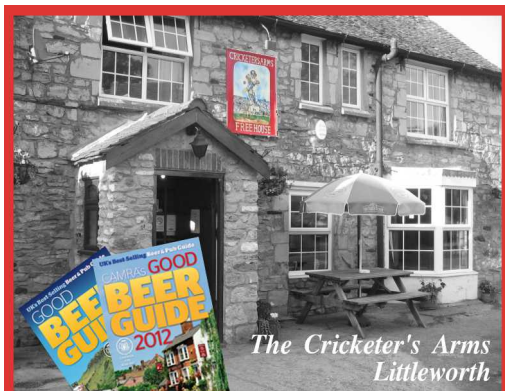
So well done to Roland, Chris and their staff, we look forward to your next festival.

## Littleworth Beer & Sausage Festival

The weekend of 16-18 September saw the return of the ever popular Autumn Beer & Sausage Festival to **The Cricketers Arms** in Littleworth. There were fourteen ales and three real ciders available in all over the weekend, plus a selection of sausages and pork pies - all from local breweries and producers.

Festival ales included beers from **Bellingers, Best Mates, Compass, Complete Pig, Patriot, Sherfield Village, Vale** and **West Berkshire** Breweries. In a very close contest, the Beer of the Festival went to **Patriot Kiwi** - a clean and refreshing 4.1% ale, brewed with two New Zealand hops - Nelson Sauvin and Green Bullet, and containing fresh Kiwi fruit and grapefruit(!), which was so popular that it sold out by the Saturday afternoon. Highly commended status was achieved by **Compass Baltic Night Stout** (The February Original Beer & Sausage Festival winner), **Sherfield Village SOLO Motueka, Complete Pig Red Lion Best bitter, Bellinger's Summer Ale** and **Patriot Pug IPA**.

Stuart Bull, landlord of The Cricketers Arms said, "It is great to see new local breweries coming onto the scene and producing exciting real ales of such quality that they can not only stand up to, but exceed brews produced by the big brewers, as the ratings that we seen from our tasting notes suggest. For us, that's why we stick with locally produced real ale."



The Cricketer's Arms  
Littleworth



*"A proper village pub, with good beer and good feel: A proper community local."*

Matthew Bullock in Oxford Mail, Sept 24 2011

[www.cricketers-arms.co.uk/welcome](http://www.cricketers-arms.co.uk/welcome)  
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# 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!



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# Town and Village Pub Tour



Ron Elder — Edinburgh & SE Scotland Branch

After visiting Oxford pubs (see issue 69), my tour continued by river and canal visiting pubs in the outlying country towns & villages.

## North

Thrupp: The "**Boat Inn**" and "**Jolly Boatman**" are both Greene King outlets so there is not much to pick and choose between them. The beer quality was OK, with the "Boat Inn" being slightly better and was my personal preference.

Upper Heyford: The "**Barley Mow**" was a steep climb up from the canal, but well worth the effort. One of these small village pubs that you wonder how it survives. The landlord and landlady were very welcoming, and the locals friendly. The Fuller's beer was good.

Aynho: The "**Great Western Arms**" is a lovely old roadside/canal side pub, but now more of an up-market expensive restaurant. The Hook Norton "**Hooky Bitter**" was good.

Banbury: There are many pubs in Banbury. My favourite is the "**Olde Reine Deer Inn**" where the quality of the Hook Norton beers were very good, especially the "**Special Dark Mild**" and "**Hooky Bitter**". The beer was also good in the "**Bell Inn**", "**Coach and Horses**", and "**Exchange**" ('Spoons), but poor in the "**Fleur-de-Lys**" (also a 'Spoons).

## West

Binsey: I was very disappointed with The "**Perch**", as I was remembering it from the '60s. The beer quality was not very great, the "**Brakspear Bitter**" being just drinkable. The Marston's "**Father Time**" was better. It seems strange that the more up-market a pub goes in the food line, the beer quality gets worse! As a main course was working out at over £20 per head, we declined their offer to dine.

Godstow: The "**Trout Inn**" was much better on the beer front, and the food more reasonably priced. The St Austell "**Tribute**" was well above average. As this pub is easily reached from Oxford, it caters more for the masses.

Eynsham: The "**Queens Head**" is excellent. One of the best pubs that I've had the pleasure to visit in recent years. The beer is very good, as is the food - much of it home produced, and realistically priced. Very much a "**use it or lose it!**" pub, as it's not getting the foot fall it deserves. The landlord and landlady both have other jobs to make ends meet. The beers tasted were White Horse "**Village Idiot**", and Bath "**Gem**".

The "**Swan Hotel**" in the village was also tried, but the beer ("**Hooky Bitter**") was only average.

The "**Talbot Inn**" on the village outskirts at Swinford Bridge was also tried. The staff were a bit naughty here as, when asked if there were shops/pubs in Eynsham, they said no. Presumably, they did not want their customers to stray from their door! The Arkell's "**Wiltshire Gold**" and "**3B**" were good.

Newbridge: The "**Rose Revived**" had very good value pensioner's meals at £5.25 for two courses. Unfortunately, the Greene King beers were only average.

The "**Maybush**" at the other end of the bridge was closed at both lunchtime and evening - as these pubs are very close together, could this closure be permanent?

Bablock Hythe: The Wadworth beers in the "**Ferryman Inn**" were average to good, with the "**Bishop's Tipple**" and "**Strong in the Arm**" being the best. The pub seems to cater for the large mobile home park next door.

Radcot Bridge: Things went downhill at the "**Swan Hotel**", where the Greene King and Otter beers tasted were only poor to average, and the food we had for dinner also poor.

Kelmscot: The "**Plough Inn**" is a lovely little pub in a beautiful hamlet - we thought that we were on a scene from "Midsomer Murders"! The beers tasted from Box Steam "**Golden Bolt**" and Halfpenny "**Four Seasons**" were very good, and our lunch good, if pricey. The only downside to this pub is the hordes of tourists from the nearby "Kelmscot Manor", but I suppose this is what keeps this remote pub viable.

Lechlade: The "**Trout Inn**" at St John's Bridge is a nice old pub on the banks of the river, and close to the lock. It is about a ten minute walk from the town centre. The Wells and Young's "**Young's Bitter**" and Sharp's "**Doom Bar**" were both good.

In Lechlade town centre, the beer quality in the "**Crown Inn**" was very good. This pub has its own micro-brewery, the Halfpenny Brewery, which, of course, major on the bar. My favourite was the "**Ha'penny Ale**" at 4%. The only downside to this busy, popular, pub was the live, amplified, music in the small bar area! It was too loud for us, and we departed for the "**Riverside**", an Arkell's pub where we had managed to get moored right outside - very convenient. The Arkell's "**Wiltshire Gold**" was of good quality.

The old coaching inn, "**New Inn**", dispensed good Sharp's "**Doom Bar**", and served excellent, good

value, pub grub. Highly recommended!

Also visited were the "**Swan**" (average Wells and Young's "**Wells Bombardier**"), and the "**Royal Oak**" (average Arkell's "**3B**").

Unfortunately, Arkell's have converted the ancient "**Red Lion**" coaching inn into an Italian restaurant, so that was given a miss.

I've seen criticism in the waterways press that only Greene King beers are on offer between Oxford and Lechlade, but I've found that, with a little research, many other beers, of good quality, can be found.

## East

Abingdon: The "**Brewery Tap**" is very good. Although a Greene King tenancy, the landlord's agreement with the brewery allows him two of their "guests", plus two guests that he can source independently. When I was in, the independent guests were the excellent "**Abingdon Bridge**" from Loose Cannon, "**American Pale Ale**" from Dark Star. The pub food was also very good. The only downside was the groups of noisy young adults, who had a military appearance.

Also visited was the "**White Horse**", good Sadler's "**Sundown**", the "**Broad Face**", acceptable Greene King "**Morland Original Bitter**". One pub that I will avoid on any future visit is the "**Blue Boar**", a bit on

the rough side, with only average **Adnams "Bitter"**.

I was very disappointed with the GBG '11 entry "**Stocks Bar**" at the Crown and Thistle". The GBG led me to think that I would get tasty LocAles, but all that was on offer were bland national brands. I was told that the bar manager had left, and the new incumbent was not interested, so I gave it a miss!

Dorchester-on-Thames: The "**Fleur de Lys**" was very good. Good quality St Austell "**Tribute**", and good food for lunch. The beer quality in the "**White Hart Hotel**" was very poor "**Hooky Bitter**". The Wells and Young's "**Young's Bitter**" in the "**George Hotel**" was good.

Wallingford: The GBG '11 entry "**Coachmakers Arms**" had beer on offer of high quality. I rated the Brakspear "**Oxford Gold**" highly, and it was a nice friendly locals pub. Must visit again, some time!

The "**George Hotel - Tavern Bar**" had good Rebellion "**Blonde**".

Goring: My best liked pub in this village was the "**John Barleycorn**". Good Brakspear "**Oxford Gold**", and a nice old village pub with friendly landlord and locals.

Also visited were the "**Catherine Wheel**" with good Brakspear "**Bitter**", and the "**Miller of Mansfield**" with good West Berks "**Good Old Boy**".

# The Gloucester Arms

## Oxfords NO.1 Rock Pub

HAPPY HOUR MON-FRI 3PM-7PM MOST PINTS £2  
 ROCK KARAOKE MONDAY NIGHTS  
 ALL DAY SUNDAY ALL DRINKS £2  
 PUB QUIZ SUNDAY NIGHTS  
 1 REAL CIDER PUMP  
 5 ALE PUMPS



21 FRIARS ENTRY  
 OXFORD  
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 727107



# The Wonders of Witney and The Wild West



Tony Goulding

Branch members have really enjoyed themselves assessing hostelries for the forthcoming local pub guide. In recent times pubs in the Wild West have been pretty stable, but with some changes in landlords and the threat of an uncertain future never far away.

Unusually for nowadays, roughly a quarter of Witney's 23 pubs do not serve food including **The New Inn**, **The Butchers**, **The Eagle Tavern**, **The Red Lion** and **The Chequers**, the latter being the only pub in Witney not serving real ale. But we found a positive and warm welcome here, and being the town's only pub night club with an over-21s policy it serves mainly bottled beers, with a very small stillage in the cellar and little room for barrels.

**The Robin Hood** on Hailey Road is a very well-run Greene King and former Morrells pub with good IPA on tap, Kevin being a very experienced and popular no-nonsense landlord with 30 years' service in the town. This 1950s two-room basic local attracts 18- to 88-year-olds, and is very much a lively sports pub which can be busy on weekend evenings. The ever popular **New Inn** has lost Brakspears Bitter, but with six hand pumps you can enjoy a night's drinking in this super pub. **The Red Lion**, although for sale, serves non-Greene King guest beers and provides the town's best live music. Across the street the present Country Pub of the Year, the **Eagle Tavern**, now has real cider on tap along with a range of Hook Norton beers, many malt whiskies and gins. That ever present smile behind the bar is welcome! – never pass without looking in.

**The Royal Oak** now has the Wadworth range of beers on tap and always in top form. This family owned pub serves good food daytimes in a very comfortable atmosphere, but it could be a pricey pint. Another well run pub with various bars, an upstairs dining room, covered patios and the best riverside garden is **The Plough**. Although it has changed landlords, the beer quality and ambiance are still very pleasant. **The Three Pigeons** on Woodgreen must be one of Witney's best kept secrets. This former Courage house is run by John, a landlord of almost 20 years' service, and it's a super place for a pint of Courage Best with good value food (Sunday lunch £4.60). There's a very relaxed feeling in this sprawling multi-roomed group of cottages, which is the envy of many a village local.

**The Griffin** (Wadworths) and **The Carpenters**, a former Morrells local almost next door to each other on Oxford Hill, are both lively pubs with large TV sports screens and noisy debate about football, with beers in fine form. Down in the west end, **The Elm Tree** serves beer from the local Wychwood brewery which is always in good form, along with tasty food.

On the busy road junction **The Court Inn** also serves Wychwood beers along with Thai food, and I recall that 25 years ago it served a splendid John Smiths Bitter.

Another fine Wadworths pub is **The Plough** at Averscot, with a reputation for good food. On the day of visiting the Henrys IPA and 6X were both in fine form in a very relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. In the pretty village of Black Bourton you will find the former **Horse and Groom**, now **The Vines**. This very up-market hotel and restaurant still serves the locals with up to two Hook Norton beers and good food. It looks very much like a country house with its own tree lined driveway. Black Bourton is now popular with aircraft spotters, as the Hercules fleet has moved from RAF Lyneham to Brize Norton.

Visiting **The Plough** at Kelmscot is always a pleasure. Now owned by a local businessman, this splendid old cottage serves very good quality food and has a super atmosphere at the bar with up to three guest beers, although this may change. Go and see for yourself, on your bike. Around another corner **The Bell** at Langford is another super up-market food house, but stand at the bar and see how the locals still enjoy a pub feeling and a friendly welcome with up to three beers available. Around another corner, the Brakspear-owned **Five Ails** is again a very up-market food house with a small bar area serving anything from the Marston's, Wychwood or Brakspear range. These latter three pubs are definitely not your average locals of years ago, but if the food approach keeps them open it can't be bad.

**The Lord Kitchener** (a splendid name and another former Morrells pub), now Greene King, has seen better times and is now for sale. On our visit the IPA and Black Sheep Golden Sheep were in fine form. Thirty years ago this pub was one of only a handful serving food in the county, and among the best. Another village local that deserves more support is **The Red Lion** at Aston, near Bampton. Serving Wells Bombardier in good form, this former Clinches then Courage pub is now owned by Enterprise. It is enthusiastically well run by a local couple with a warm welcome always.

More news in the next edition and please, when you enjoy your drinking, let us know of your experiences near and far and let others enjoy.



# *The Crown*

*Selection of 7 local and seasonal guest ales*

*Food served 10am ~10pm*

*Come and try our new Spring & Summer menu*

*59a Cornmarket St. Oxford OX1 37B 01865 256047*

*thecrownoxford@hotmail.co.uk*

*www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk*

# Oxford CAMRA Branch Diary



**Sat 15th October, 12pm-6pm**

**Beer Festival Publicity Crawl**

*Reading*

Meet at 12 noon, Oxford Train Station

**Fri 21st October, 4pm-7pm**

**Launch of Oxford Pub Guide**

*Lamb & Flag, St Giles, Oxford*

**Fri 21st October, 7pm-10pm**

**Beer Festival Publicity Crawl**

*Oxford*

Meet 7pm, Lamb & Flag, St Giles

**Thu 27th October to Sat 29th**

**October**

**Oxford Beer Festival**

*Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford*

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

**Tue 1st November, 7:30pm**

**Branch Meeting**

*Plough, Wolvercote, OX2 8BD*

**Sat 12th November, 12pm-5pm**

**Working social at Wantage Beer**

**Festival**

*Wantage Beer Festival, Civic Hall, Wantage*

**Fri 18th November**

**Oxford Drinkers Deadline**

Please send news, articles, photos to [editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:editor@oxfordcamra.org.uk) before this date.

**Sat 19th November, 12pm-5pm**

**Rural pub survey minibus trip**

Pick up Stratton Way, Abingdon and Lamb & Flag, Oxford

**Sat 26th November, 12pm-3pm**

**Presentation of Town & Country Pub of the Year**

*Cricketers Arms, Littleworth*

Catch Heyfordian bus 104 at 11:40am from stop L1, High Street.

Return Heyfordian bus 103 at 14:02 or bus 104 at 15:02.

**Sat 3rd December, 12pm-5pm**

**Churchend Brewery Visit**

Minibus trip. See web site for more details on pickup times.

**Wed 7th December, 7:30pm-**

**9:30pm**

**Branch meeting**

*Kings Head & Bell, Abingdon*

For more details about social events please check the web site at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/diary](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/diary), email [social@oxfordcamra.org.uk](mailto:social@oxfordcamra.org.uk) or join our mailing list at [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/mailling-lists)

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

# Oxford City Pub of The Year Nominations



Each year, the Oxford branch of CAMRA choose two pubs to be branch pub of the year; one from Oxford City, and the other from the surrounding towns and villages. The town & village voting took place recently (see Page 17) and now it is time for CAMRA members to vote for the Oxford City Pub of the Year.

The Branch try to make the competition as fair as possible by requiring everyone who votes to have visited each of the six shortlisted pubs. A voting form can be picked up from any of the shortlisted pubs. After having the form stamped in each pub, number the pubs in order of preference. The deadline for receiving voting forms is 1st December 2011 by post, or they can be brought to the December Branch meeting.

All CAMRA members are entitled to vote and we hope that as many as possible will want to help support our pubs this way.

**The 6 pubs shortlisted for the Oxford City Pub of the Year competition are:**

**Far from the Madding Crowd**

12-10 Friars Entry, OX1 2BY

Open: Mon-Wed 11.30-11  
Thu-Sat 11.30-midnight  
Sun 12-10.30

**Mason's Arms**

2 Quarry School Place,  
OX3 8LH

Open: Mon-Fri 5-11pm  
Sat 12-11pm  
Sun 12-4pm & 7-10.30pm

**Turf Tavern**

4-5 Bath Place, OX1 3SU

Open: Mon-Sat 11-11  
Sun 12-10.30

**Lamb & Flag**

12 St Giles, OX1 3JS

Open: 12-11pm

**Royal Blenheim**

13 St. Ebbes, OX1 1PT

Open: Mon-Tue 11- 11  
Wed-Thur 11-11.30  
Fri-Sat 11-12  
Sun 10-11.30

**White Horse**

52 Broad Street OX1 3BB

Open: 11am-midnight



# Beer Festival Diary



## Wed 5 - Sun 23 October

### Wetherspoon Real Ale & Cider Festival

All JD Wetherspoon & Lloyd's No.1 Bars  
www.jdwrealale.co.uk

## Sat 22 – Tue 25 October

### Real Cider Festival

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

## Friday 21 - Sunday 23 October

Beer festival at the Cherry Tree, High Street, Steventon  
20 real ales and some ciders.

## Thu 27 – Sat 29 October

### Birmingham Beer Festival

Second City Suite, Sherlock Street, Birmingham  
250 beers plus 40 ciders & perries  
www.birminghambeerfestival.org.uk

## Thursday 27 - Sat 29 October

### Oxford Beer Festival

Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford  
160 beers plus 40 ciders & perries  
www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

## Thursday 27 - Sat 29 October

### 25th Swindon Festival

STEAM Museum, Kemble Drive, Swindon  
100 beers plus ciders & perries  
Friday evening entry by ticket only  
www.swindoncamra.org.uk

## Friday 28 - Saturday 29 October

### Aylesbury Beer Festival

Bucks County Council Sports & Social Club, Lower Road, Aylesbury (note new venue)  
www.swansupping.org.uk

## Thursday 3 – Sat 5 November

### Turf Tavern Beer Festival

Turf Tavern, Bath Place, Oxford  
“beers from the south west of England”  
01865 243235  
www.theturf tavern.co.uk

## Friday 11 – Sat 12 November

### 4th Wantage Beer Festival

Wantage Civic Hall, Portway, Wantage (note new venue)  
28 beers plus 4 ciders & perries  
www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

## Friday 11 - Sunday 13 November

### Gardeners Arms Beer Festival

Plantation Road, Jericho, Oxford  
10 beers  
01865 559814  
www.thegarden-oxford.co.uk

## Thursday 24 – Sat 26 November

### 26th Dudley Winter Ales Fayre

Dudley Concert Hall, St James's Road, Dudley  
70+ beers, +ciders & perries  
www.dudleycamra.org.uk

## Tuesday 6 – Sat 10 December

### 28th Pig's Ear Beer & Cider Festival

Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney, London  
200+ beers, ciders & perries  
www.pigsear.org.uk

## Saturday 10 December

### Haddenham Winterfest

Village Hall Complex, Banks Road, Haddenham  
12 noon-5pm  
25+ beers plus cider & perry  
haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk



## Tuesday 13 - Sat 17 December

### Winter Beer Festival

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

## Thursday 27 - Sat 29 October

### Oxford Beer Festival

Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford



www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

Latest information about beer festivals can be found on the Oxford CAMRA web site at  
[www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/festivals](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk/festivals)

# Town & Village Pub of The Year



**The Cricketer's Arms in Littleworth** has been voted as The Oxford CAMRA branch Town and Village Pub of the Year 2011.

Stuart and Angie Bull can justifiably be very proud to scoop this award from our CAMRA Branch. Their hard work and dedication to their pub and customers show in this very welcoming village pub.

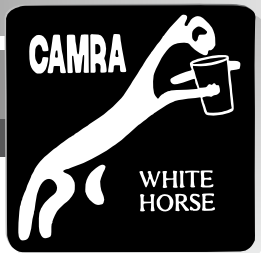
The Cricketer's Arms was the first pub to get the LocAle accreditation from our branch and you can always find interesting local well kept ales here.

The Cricketer's competed against five other excellent and highly rated pubs: **The Brewery Tap in Abingdon**, **The Eagle Tavern in Witney**, **The King's Arms in Kidlington**, **The Morris Clown in Bampton** and **The New Inn in Witney**.



# White Horse Branch of CAMRA

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



The White Horse Branch was established in December 2007 with a small committee who did not want to see the old Vale of White Horse Branch disappear and merge back into Oxford Branch.

White Horse Branch covers an area of Oxfordshire countryside stretching from Coleshill, Shrivenham and Ashbury in the West, along the south bank of the Thames to Shippon, Steventon and East Hendred in the East. Taking in the larger towns of Faringdon and Wantage and Grove, the area is predominantly rural and dotted with numerous villages and hamlets. The rural nature of our branch provides us with a wealth of picturesque village inns and quaint “gems” to enjoy but also presents us with a problem in our attempts to galvanise efforts in campaigning issues. Many of our remote village pubs are those most at risk from closure or assimilation by a Pub Co, who may be less than sensitive to the wishes of locals or CAMRA aims in promoting real ales.

We hold our regular branch meetings at a different pub each month but there are still plenty left to visit. If your cherished local would welcome a branch visit, pop along to one of our meetings and let us know about it.

## Branch Contacts

For more information please contact:

- Neil Crook: Chairman  
contact@whitehorsecamra.org.uk
- Peter Fowler: Membership Secretary  
membership@whitehorsecamra.org.uk
- Ian Winfield: Social Secretary  
social@whitehorsecamra.org.uk

# White Horse Branch Diary

## 21st - 23rd October

**Beer festival at the Cherry Tree, Steventon.**

20 real ales and some ciders.

## 27th-29th October

**Oxford CAMRA Beer Festival**

Oxford Town Hall. 5-11pm Thur, 11am-11pm Fri, 11am-8pm Sat. Featuring around 160 different real ales and around 30 real ciders/perrys

**27th October, 7pm**

**Support Oxford beer festival Social**

## 27th-29th October

**25th Swindon Beer Festival**

The Steam Museum, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2TA

**Saturday 29th October 1pm to 5pm**

Social. Meet at the Locale bar

## 29th October, 12:30pm

**Central Southern Cider Pub of the Year for 2011**

Presentation to the Royal Oak, Wantage will take place at the pub at around 12.30pm to 1pm

## Tuesday 1st November

**Beer Festival Publicity Crawl Faringdon.**

Please join us anywhere en route.

- 19.00: The Swan ..... 1 Park Road
- 20.00: The Red Lion ..... 3 Cornmarket
- 21.00: The Old Crown Coaching Inn 25 Market Place
- 21.30: The Folly ..... 54 London Street

## Tuesday 1st November, 8pm

**Central Southern CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2011**

Presentation to the Radnor Arms, Coleshill

## Monday 7th November

**Beer Festival Publicity Crawl Wantage.**

Please join us anywhere en route.

- 19.00: Bear Hotel ..... Market Place
- 19.30: King Alfred's Head ..... 31 Market Place
- 20.00: Shoulder of Mutton ..... 38 Wallingford Street
- 21.00: Royal Oak ..... Newbury Street

## Friday 11th & Saturday 12th November

**WANTAGE BEER Festival**

Improved centrally located NEW VENUE

Wantage Civic Hall

See advert on page 19.

## 18th-20th November

**Beer Festival & CAMRA Social, Steventon Sports Club.**

Easy bus access from Abingdon, Oxford & Wantage.

Meet the brewer on Saturday pm

## Tuesday 22nd November, 7:30pm

**Social at The Plough, West Hanney.**

Meet the Brewer from Bellinger's Brewery.

## Tuesday 13 December, 7:45pm

**Branch Meeting**

Eight Bells, Eaton

## Our Website

For a wealth of information about breweries, pubs, events and news in our area, Visit our website:

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

# A visit to Prescott Ales

Claire Hodkinson reports on a trip from the Vale to Cheltenham



Ten keen real ale drinkers set off from the Barrington Arms Hotel, Shrivenham, for a Saturday trip to the Prescott Ales brewery in Cheltenham. Arriving around noon, we received a warm welcome from the owner and the brewer, and a welcome cool pint!

An interesting and entertaining talk was given, during which we enjoyed two of Prescott Ales products. The name "Prescott Ales" comes from the hill climb race track, north of Cheltenham, atop which the owner has his family home. The two organisations are unrelated, though Prescott Ales is the beer of choice at the race day events of course!

The brewery is situated on the outskirts of Cheltenham in a spacious business unit with a mezzanine, allowing the brewer to take advantage of gravity in the brewing process. Most of the brewing kit came from a redundant Firkin house. The kit is completed by three fermentation vessels and they are at present brewing twice or thrice weekly, depending on demand.

Ales include a core range of three: **Hill Climb** (3.8%), **Track Record** (4.4%) and **Grand Prix** (5.2%), along with seasonal beers. Distinctive branding features are the strap line "Great British Lubricants" and individual original artwork featuring period race cars and drivers.

The three core beers are available in bottles also featuring the attractive and colourful artwork – making it an ideal gift for the petrol-head friend or family member perhaps?

After such a splendid start to the day, we then set off for town, and a pub crawl. We visited several pubs in Cheltenham centre starting with the **Jolly Brewmaster**, (39 Painswick Road) where 8 real ales and two ciders were on offer; the **Arbour Ales Nelson Sauvign** 4.0% abv tried was 'interesting', one of the most bitter beers this writer has ever tasted, and a definite toe curler. Next stop was the sister pub **Kemble Brewery Inn**, (27 Fairview) which also had several beers on tap; **Wye Valley Butty Bach**, **Triple FFF**, **Moondance** and **Fullers London Pride** were some we sampled.



## 4<sup>th</sup> WANTAGE BEER FESTIVAL



NEW VENUE for 2011

### WANTAGE CIVIC HALL

Portway, Wantage OX12 9BY

Fri 11<sup>th</sup> & Sat 12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2011

Opening Times: Friday 11.30am-11.00pm

Saturday 11.00am – 11.00pm

## 28 Real Ales

'Including Festival Commissioned Ales'

### 4 Cider & Perry

Glass hire £2

Festival glasses available  
Food and soft drinks served

#### Admission prices:

Friday 11.30am-6pm: CAMRA members Free, Others £2.00

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

Saturday 11am-11pm: CAMRA members Free, Others £2.00  
(Under 21s need ID)

Parking at Venue

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

Enquiries: [beerfestival11@whitehorsecamra.org.uk](mailto:beerfestival11@whitehorsecamra.org.uk)

# In Medieval Footsteps

...by Dick Bosley



While researching a history book for the village of Steventon we found that Westminster Abbey had passed a ruling in 1281 that the 'tenants of Steventon' had a duty to take some corn to Winchester Cathedral. For the average 13th century peasant this was probably as near to a holiday as you got, with at least a week taken over the journey and hospitality being supplied by churches on route.

We decided to re-enact the 60 mile trip but felt it more practical to rely on pubs for refreshments. Having neither the necessary skills nor the inclination to use packhorses we decided that bags of flour were more practical and Wessex Mill in Wantage kindly donated some.

Wanting to avoid major roads we started at Steventon Church at 7am, walking around the back of the AERE site then up to and over the Ridgeway. More paths and tracks saw us arrive at a village green shouting "there's a pub!". This was the **Crab** at Chieveley and I'm afraid I can't remember what the beer was but, at nearly £14 for two and a half pints it was not as memorable as it should have been. After minor repairs to boots and feet we continued, crossing the M4 before reaching the **Blackbird** at Bagnor. As great fans of Butts brewery we were delighted to see and sample both the **Jester** and **Barbus Barbus** while sitting in the sunny garden.

Reluctantly pressing on we had a longish stretch to do before reaching the **Furze Bush** at Ball Hill. **Marstons Pedigree** and **Waddies 6X** and a couple of bowls of cheesy chips fuelled us for a very long afternoon and evening, reaching our B&B, the Railway at Whitchurch, just after 9pm, having covered 36 miles. Although they had stopped doing food they were kind enough to make us some sandwiches that we washed down with a few pints of **London Pride**, too tired even to reach last orders.

With perhaps less enthusiasm than on day one, and feeling stiff in all the wrong places, we set off in the morning drizzle, thinking that perhaps using a bus might not be such a bad idea. We resisted that temptation but, owing to ridiculous licensing laws, the first open pub we found was the **Running Horse** at Littleton. Lunch and **Palmers Best** – so good we tried it thrice – restored what passed for good humour.

The last stretch into Winchester had to be alongside the road but we reached the **Eclipse** by mid afternoon, celebrating with **Ringwood Best** and



**49er**. Across a road and the Green we presented the Dean of the Cathedral with the flour to be passed on to residents of the almshouses.

For anyone interested the book can still be purchased in the North Star, Steventon, for a mere £5.

## Central Southern Region Pub of the year

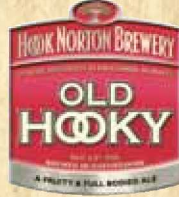
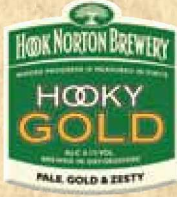
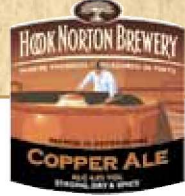
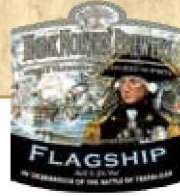
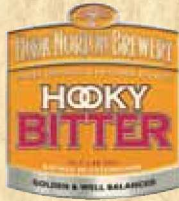
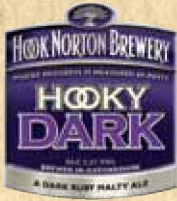
The Radnor Arms, Coleshill, has been voted as CAMRA's 2011 Central Southern Regional Pub of the Year by its members. Alan Watkins (owner) and landlady Gemma Court took over the pub in January 2010. This was soon followed by the opening of the on-site Old Forge Brewery in August 2010.

Since then the pub has gone from strength to strength, attracting clientele from near and far with its excellent range of beers, convivial atmosphere and fine food. It is the current White Horse Branch POTY, Oxfordshire POTY and now Regional POTY. The pub will now go forward into the next stage of the competition where the 16 regional winners fight it out to find CAMRA's National Pub of the Year.

Congratulations to Alan, Gemma and the rest of the hard-working team for getting to this stage in such a short period of time since taking over the running of the pub.



# Great real ales at your local!



Available September/October/November 2011

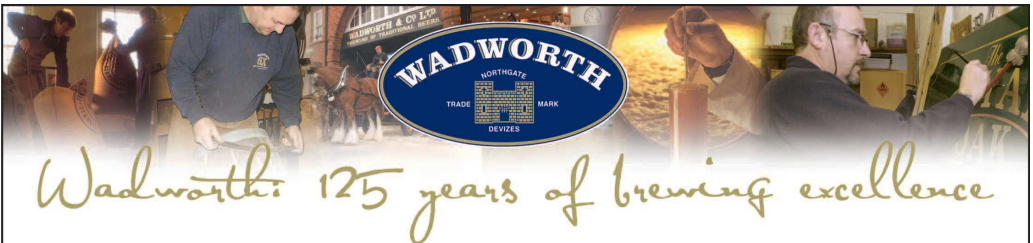
Why not book a **Hook Norton Brewery tour**, where you'll witness our brewer's craft and get the chance to sample some of our finest beer.



1849

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For more information call **01608 730384** or visit [www.hooky.co.uk](http://www.hooky.co.uk)



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# Bainton Bikes Beer Lover Rides Seeking the Holy GrALE

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BIKES**

Kevin Moreland, [www.baintonbikes.com](http://www.baintonbikes.com)

6 Bainton Road, Oxford, OX2 7AF, t:01865 365658

When the bicycle became available to the masses it slowly started to make the world a smaller place. People found a new freedom and were able to travel to neighbouring villages, towns and cities easier and cheaper than ever before. Soon it became possible to explore areas that may of otherwise also remained unknown or out of reach.

Now-a-days there are a huge amount of bicycles all carefully designed and manufactured to be best suited for a variety of activities, all offering the best practicalities for each intended use.

My personal favourite of which is seeking out cracking pubs and getting merrily sloshed, although you'll be pushed to find a manufacture who designs this specific bike (except for the beer bike in Holland; essentially a bar on wheels).

Whilst I am a big fan of drinking locally, whilst the weather is still good I want to get out, and seek out new fantastic pubs in the nearby countryside.

This route is one of our longest to date and is approximately 40 miles, which we took all day to ride.

Essential Equipment to take includes; Map, puncture repair kit, spare inner tubes, pump, water, Allen key and spanner set, a decent lock, a phone and lights.

This route is all on road and I took my Dawes Audax road bike (but any bike will do).

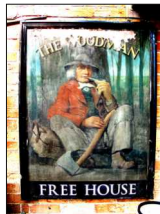
We start the day with a puncture, annoying but it happens to us all at some point. After a quick change we soon head out of Oxford past the Pear Tree roundabout and follow the cycle track towards Yarnton. As we are running late we decide to forgo the pubs along the way and turn left at The Turnpike towards Cassington before heading off towards Worton and Long Hanborough. It is a beautiful day, the sun is shinging, the bikes singing, autumn is undoubtedly coming with the trees being so very colourful and most even better I have the day off and I'm on route to a new pub!

The first stop is **The Three Horsehoes** in Long Hanborough just after midday but alas it isn't open. After forgoing the previous stops we're gasping for a pint and quickly move on, we stop very shortly after at the very welcoming **The Hand and Shears** in Church Hanborough. This is just over 9 miles from our starting point in Oxford and by far the longest we normally ride before a stop. There are 2 ales to choose from and we select a pint of **Bombardier**.

Refreshed we move on and ride a further 1 mile before arriving at the **Oxfordshire Yeoman** in Freeland. We arrive at lunchtime and the smell of food is lovely, so we grab a bag of crisps and choose a pint of **Everards Tiger** from the 2 available. This is a nice pub, and appears to support the local sport



community; there is a dart board, Aunt Sally, trophy cabinet and a cork board on the wall with fixture details for the local football and cribbage teams.



Moving on we ride for 3 miles to **The Woodman** in North Leigh, which turns out to be a great little boozier with friendly staff. We choose a pint of **6X** from the 2 on offer and move into the garden. Whilst it is still early in the day the pub is sadly quiet this is such a shame for such a nice friendly pub, if you get a chance it is worth a visit.

## Summary of Cycle Parking Facilities

- **The Hand and Shears, Church Hanborough:** Benches outside front to lock your bikes to
- **Oxfordshire Yeoman, Freeland:** Space in the front garden
- **The Woodman, North Leigh:** Bar staff will kindly let you take your bikes into rear garden (wheeling through the pub)
- **The Crawley Inn, Crawley:** Plenty of space in the front terrace or car park opposite
- **Bird in Hand, Whiteoak Green:** Large car park and front seating area
- **Rose and Crown, Charlbury:** No where to park at pub (except leaning your bikes on the wall). Plenty of places close by in town
- **The Bell Inn, Charlbury:** As above (opposite the Rose n Crown)
- **The White Horse, Stonesfield:** Space is available in the front garden

4 miles on we come across our next stop, **The Crawley Inn**, Crawley. What a phenomenal pub! We approach the pub surrounding by a lot of countryside and not much else and hear it before seeing it, the distinctive sound of Motorhead can be heard from the outside speakers. Approaching the pub we find a St Georges flag flapping in the end, stocks in the garden and a cannon on the roof. Inside we walk past the swords and meet the landlord at the bar, a friendly motor-biker who informs us the pub is privately owned (by an elderly lady with a Zimmer frame he warmly greets as the name 'The Crawley Crawler'), has live music every weekend, 12 acres of land with camping available for £5 a night, chips can be made if you're really hungry and there is belly dancing every Wednesday night. The pub is well known as a biker's pub but the landlord is not prejudice and anyone is welcome.

There are 5 draft ciders to choose from but sadly there is only one draft ale available, so we settle for a good pint of **Doombar**. Whilst the choice of beer is slim this pub is brilliant, located in the remote Oxfordshire countryside its being run uniquely without constraints just as the owner wants. This pub may have stayed lost to me if it wasn't for my bike, I recommend it to anyone.

Being such a good boozier we stop for another before getting directions that miss the hilliest parts of



the ride and head for 1 mile to **Bird in Hand** in Whiteoak Green. What a contrast! Another pub surrounded by just countryside and granted this pub is a hotel pub but if pubs had arses this one would be so far up it its own you would only see its feet. There are 3 pumps but only one ale on, so we choose a pint of **Ramsbury**.

Moving swiftly on we ride onto **The Royal Oak** in Ramsden but sadly find it closed, so we continue riding the further 6 miles before stopping at the **Rose and Crown** in Charlbury. We've stumbled into another great pub, a CAMRA award winning pub. A freehouse boasting 6 ales to

*Continued on Page 24*

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*Bainton Bike Ride continued*

choose from and a friendly atmosphere to enjoy them. We start with a **Blue Boars Spank** a reassuringly tasty 6% beer. We stop for another beer, but night is fast approaching and we're peckish. On the recommendation of the bar staff we head across the road to **The Bell Inn** where we grab a pint of **Exmoor Gold** and order some pretty good grub.

It is now dark and the day is drawing to an end, firing up our lights we roll out of town down the eerily quiet countryside roads; needless to say good lights are essential for these rides. We ride for a further 5 miles to Stonesfield and arrive just in time at a freehouse; **The White Horse** where we select the only ale on draft, a pint of **Ringwood Best** and a warming chaser for the last stretch. We enquire as to why there is only 1 ale on offer and the landlord sadly informs us he just doesn't get enough call for ale for it to be viable. Again this is another pub which I fear may be struggling to hold onto its traditional pub roots and be forced into the restaurant arena.

We head off hoping to make it back to Long Hanborough in time for a cheeky night cap, but alas no such luck; we miss last orders and go our separate ways to ride the last stretch home.

Despite missing a final drink it has been a great day out and during our expedition to seek the holy grail of pubs and beer we've stumbled across some cracking boozers which I'm looking forward to venturing to again. My bike brings pubs closer and I implore you to visit and enjoy these pubs.



To view more photos of this ride please visit our website – [www.baintonbikes.com](http://www.baintonbikes.com)

To view a detailed map of the route please visit <http://www.endomondo.com/workouts/22724842>

These are regular rides we run and if you are interested in joining then please contact me on [kevin@baintonbikes.com](mailto:kevin@baintonbikes.com) or call me on 01865 311610

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# Travelling Drinker in... Estonia (& Helsinki)



Chris Hunter



July found seven of our branch members in Tallinn, Estonia's capital. Our trip started with an early morning, 2 hour, flight from Stansted. We arrived at our apartment situated in a prime location overlooking the old city square.

After dropping of the bags we decided to head off and sample the delights of the old city calling in at the aptly named **Drinks Bar and Restaurant** which had a large selection of both draught and bottled beers from Estonia, Finland, Germany and the UK to name but a few. Two particularly good beers were **Munchen Beer** at 6.2% and **Mort Subite** a dark Belgian beer at 5%.

Once suitably watered we headed off to the **Valli Bar** which only sold local Estonian draught beers along with the ubiquitous **Carlsberg lager**.

From the Valli bar we headed down into the **Karja Kelder Bar** which is a local beer cellar. This bar had a great selection of local draught beers, lagers and bottled beers from around Europe. We sampled a beautiful pint of the local **Saku Dark** at 5.5%, which is basically a dark lager.

Whilst there we bumped into a couple from Finland both of whom were CAMRA gold card holders, something we had not seen before. We had planned to pop over to Finland (Helsinki) and we pumped them for info on the local microbreweries and where we should visit. Armed with the appropriate details we bid farewell and headed off to the **Beer House** a micro brewery near the main square.



They had a good selection of German draught beers, along with Belgian and local ones, they also had an extensive selection of bottled beers. Most of us settled for the **Dunkel Extra** a dark beer at 5.6%.

After an afternoon of walking and sampling a selection of bars we decided it time for some food. There are some excellent restaurants both in and around the city square, albeit some are a little expensive. We opted to return to the **Drinks Bar** as they have an excellent menu at a reasonable price, the local steamed meat dumpling with fries is a local favourite.

Following a hearty meal we headed off to the **Depeche Mode Bar** which is something of a local landmark (if you like that sort of music). This bar is a shrine to the band, and is decked out with various memorabilia from their heyday. The bar has a good selection of bottled beers and a few local draught beers, we settled for bottles of **Dunkel** and a chat with the friendly barman.

The rest of the evening was spent soaking up the sights and a visit to one of our favourite bars, the **Hell Hunt** located just off the main square. The selection of draft beers included **Estonian Saku lager** or **Tume**, which is a dark beer at around 5%.

As with Drinks bar this bar also doubles up as a restaurant and has a great selection of reasonably priced food. The potato, minced beef topped with cheese is particularly recommended.

Day 2 started off in gorgeous sunshine with a hearty breakfast and coffee. We had decided to use this day to visit the beer festival which was on for the week in one of the large local parks on the outskirts of the city. As we were unsure of the opening time for the festival the decision was taken to have a leisurely walk to the festival site via the ferry terminal to check on departure details for our trip over to Helsinki the following day.

Continued on Page 26

*Travelling Drinker continued* The walk took us through Kadrioru Park which is an oasis in the middle of the city. In the past it was the location for the Tsar's summer palace and other buildings of note. It now is the location of the President's residence and various museums which are well worth a visit. We eventually arrived at the festival park only to find the festival did not start until 5pm. Undeterred we headed back into the centre of Tallinn via the scenic coast road stopping off for a well earned rest at the **Kompott bar and restaurant** where we had a pint of **Estonian A Le Coq** beer at 5.0%, rather a nice amber beer.

Back in the heart of the city we found the **Brauhouse**, a German keller where we had **Katowise dark beer** at 4.8%. Returning to the festival, soaking up the sights and smells, we proceeded to sample the beers and ciders on offer. Although there were a large number of stalls, the range of beers and ciders tended to be mainly either **Estonian Saku lager** or **Tume dark beer**, Finnish, Belgian and German. The evening ended with a trip back to the **Hell Hunt** for a few pints of the **Tume** and live music.



Day 3 was an early morning start down to the ferry terminal for the 2 hour crossing to Helsinki. We could not have picked a better day as there not a single cloud in the sky and the Baltic Sea was like a mill pond. On arrival we headed up towards the old part of the city centre stopping off for breakfast in a café recommended by one of the locals who took pity on us looking lost. In the café we were served by chap that happened to be the brother of the landlord in the **Broad Face in Abingdon**, how surreal, what a small world. Suitably fed and advised on the sights not to miss we headed off for our first drink in the **Pub Ikkuna** opposite the main train station, which had a good selection of local draught beers and ciders as well as bottled beer from around Europe. We settled for **Huvila Pale Ale** at 4.2% a nice session ale and local cider at 5%, (the only down side being the cost of the round 44 euro's).

Our mission was to locate the microbreweries given to us by our friend the previous day, after some searching we managed to find **Kitty's Bar** located within a shopping Mall, this turned out to be the best bar of the day in terms of beer quality, price and hospitality of the landlord. The bar was like stepping into a typical old London pub with ornate woodwork and glass panels. The beer and cider selection was excellent, with such brands as **Fullers ESB**, **Seafarers Ale**, **Spitfire**, **Hobgoblin**, **Magners** and **Old Rosie** cider; at 4.2% the Seafarers Ale was excellent.



Wrenching ourselves from here we headed up to the **Willi Waino bar** sited opposite Stockmans shopping centre. This bar is a must for all ale enthusiasts. It had an extensive range of both draught, bottled beers and ciders from the UK, USA Finland and Sweden. The UK beers offered came from Brewdog, Bellhaven, Ridgeway, IPA, Crouch Vale, etc., with **Skull Splitter & Old Engine oil** on the menu.

Last port of call before catching the ferry home was the **L'Angleterre Bar** which again is well worth visiting, as with all the bars we visited the landlord could not have been more hospitable. The beers and ciders included Sandels, Shepherd and Neame, Newcastle, Fullers and others that varied week by

week. On this occasion we all settled for an excellent pint of **Victorian Ruby Mild**. Arriving back in Tallinn there was just enough time to head up to the **Hell Hunt** for some food and a nightcap.

Our last full day of our stay in Tallinn we decided to take the tram up to a district called Kopli which is located just outside the Old Town Centre to visit a little Russian bar located opposite the tram terminal. **The Baar Derevyashka**, located on a previous visit, was still there and they had bought new furniture. It is basic but clean, they had a three draught beers two lights, **A Le Coq** and **Alexander** and one dark **Palmse Wiru**, plus Fizz cider, they were all in excellent condition. The first thing we noticed was the price 1.40 euros a pint compared with 5 euros in Finland. We spent all afternoon here even managing to making new friends with a team of Russian builders who came to undertake some work for the bar owner. Once finished they settled for some food and copious amounts of Vodka which we were encouraged to try. The rest of the evening turned out to be rather a blur...

The trip turned out to be an excellent 5 days made even better by the fantastic weather with temperatures in the mid 20's all week. Tallinn has a lot to offer the discerning traveller, particularly the friendliness of the people. There is an excellent selection of cafes, bars and superb beers on offer make the trip worthwhile. Helsinki is also well worth a visit, as with Tallinn the people are very friendly, but its worth remembering that the cost of food and drink is high.

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**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

# Call for community say when pubs, shops and services change use

CAMRA is supporting a campaign from Living Streets, the national charity that stands up for pedestrians, to give local people a say when pubs, shops and local services change their use.

Currently, changing a building's use within the same use class category, or between certain use classes, counts as 'permitted development' and does not require planning permission. But this allows some surprising changes of use which can have a major impact on the viability of a town or neighbourhood – such as changing premises from a pub to a pay-day loan store or a betting shop without local residents or businesses being able to voice an opinion.

This loss of local services can lead to isolation; 28% of British adults feel isolated, or have a friend or loved one who does, because of a lack of access to local pubs, shops and services, sending neighbourhoods into decline.

Everyday experience, as well as research, tells us that access to local shops and services, such as pubs, within easy walking distance is hugely important for a vibrant local community. The Government has already started to review the Use Classes Order governing changes of use, with a view to liberalising it further. CAMRA and Living Streets are calling for a Community Right to Protect; not introducing more red tape but simply ensuring

that people have a democratic say through the planning system when their local pub or shop changes its use.

With the government undertaking a radical shakeup of the planning system, and 1300 pubs having closed last year alone, there has never been a better time to act. The review has already started - please join the campaign and write to Secretary of State for Communities, Eric Pickles, at <http://bit.ly/thelocaljoke>.

A local example is the Ox in Abingdon. Tesco bought the pub and ripped the interior out, making it impossible to return it to being a pub, without needing planning permission. After a protest march by residents, shopkeepers and town councillors in August, Tesco sent out a letter to local residents explaining that they do not need planning permission to change a pub into a shop.

A petition for Planning Reform to Protect Town Centre Diversity has been set up at <http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/4922>

## 2012 Members' Weekend and AGM

The CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM 2012 will be held at The Riviera Centre in Torquay on 30th March-1st April 2012. It will provide CAMRA members with the opportunity to engage in CAMRA's national campaigns and discuss future policy and direction. It also provides a chance to catch up with each other over a pint, visit recommended pubs and go on organised trips.

Torquay boasts a large number of good quality pubs, both in the centre and the surrounding areas. There are 10 breweries within the Torquay area, and many of them will be supplying their real ales for sale in the Members Bar. For real cider/perry drinkers, the award winning Ye Olde Cider Bar in Newton Abbot is close by.

Torquay boasts 22 miles of coastline, consisting of coves, cliffs and beaches so there are plenty of local attractions for members to visit. If members fancy escaping Torquay, the Dartmoor National Park is nearby which offers fantastic scenery, walks and pubs.

The Weekend is open to all CAMRA members 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 to campaign through workshops, policy discussion groups and seminars
- Enjoy a few drinks in the members bar with a good selection of local real ales
- Visit pubs in Torquay and the surrounding areas
- Visit local breweries and cider producers on organised trips.

Website link; <http://www.camra.org.uk/agm>

# A Campaign of Two Halves

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Applications will be processed within 21 days

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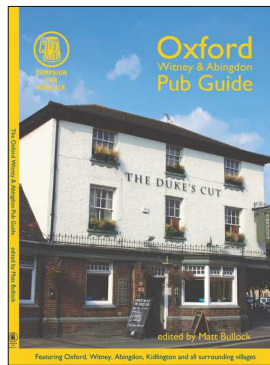
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# The Greatest Ever Pub Crawl?



It is early September and I'm writing this in The Boot Inn at Barnard Gate, just off the A40 between Witney and Eynsham. There is very little significance in it being this particular pub, but I'm marking something of a special occasion here, for me at least: this is the final pub of my crawl, pub number 301 of the greatest ever pub crawl.

A while ago, Oxford CAMRA pledged as its branch objectives for the year ahead to produce a new pub guide to all of the pubs and bars in its area, and also for members to visit all of the pubs in the area to get a more up-to-date view on what they were like. As the editor of the two previous Oxford guides, I took on the first job, and in order to do it justice, I decided to single-handedly take on the second: I would visit all of the branch's 319 pubs (or at least those that were open) during the spring and summer of 2011.

I began in a random place and at a random time one Friday evening in February. I was in the Kings Arms in Holywell Street, Oxford, and over a pint or two of Slater's Original, decided that my quest would begin there and then. I popped out to a local newsagent to buy a notebook, and from then onwards recorded my visits, primarily to give me information for the guide, but also to remind me of my ambitious quest, the places I had been and the things I had observed.

From that day onwards, I set about visiting all of the branch's pubs, which, taking in to account closures temporary and permanent, gave me a total of 301 pubs, bars and hotel bars to visit, in locations as far afield as Murcott and Kelmscott, Burcott and North Leigh.

My quest was, as I said above, a personal one, but that's not to say I travelled alone. As a branch, we have had some excellent evenings out by car - thanks primarily to Tony Goulding and Chris Hunter for driving - and there were some evening and all day visits to Witney, Abingdon, Wheatley, Kidlington, Bampton and various Oxford suburbs, to name but a few, that were well-attended by branch members.

So as I finish my beer in pub number 301, I can reflect on some fantastic pubs. It's always dangerous to list favourites, because you're always likely to miss someone off the list; likewise, telling you of all the dives I've encountered on my travels would not make me very popular either. I'm sure if, or should that be when, you buy and read the guide, you'll be able to see which pubs fall into which category, even if you have to read between the lines now and again.

The 112-page, full colour guide will be published in mid-October, and should be in the bookshops and available from the Branch or from CAMRA's website shortly afterwards. We will also be selling copies at the Oxford Beer Festival from 27-29 October at the Town Hall, so you can pick up a copy there.

The Oxford, Witney & Abingdon Pub Guide is published by CAMRA Books on 14th October 2011; ISBN: 978-1-85849-301-1, RRP £5.99, £4.99 to members

## Time Gentlemen Please! A Brief History of Abingdon

History books often contain very little about pubs and beer even though both have had a significant influence on people's everyday lives through the ages. To fill this gap, Dick Bosley has written an informative booklet showing the influence that beer has had on society, focusing on Abingdon, a market town with a great brewing heritage.

It is a charmingly laid out booklet, with heaps of information covering all manner of subject related to beer.

A particularly interesting section of the book is a chapter entitled 'Recollections' which contains anecdotes and memories from people who worked for Morlands or went out drinking in Abingdon in the mid 20th century.

Other sections include a history of beer and how politics, licensing laws and wars have affected beer styles, pubs and the brewing industry. Another chapter explains how pub names and signs came about, stories behind their name. The final chapter entitled 'Last Orders' includes stories of pub games such as Aunt Sally, Kittles and the tradition of the Abingdon Morris Dancers.



To buy the book, send a cheque for £3 to Richard Bosley, 21 The Green, Stevenon, OX13 6RR. It is also available in several Abingdon pubs and shops.

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