

FREE

Swan Supping

Issue 135

Dec 2019/Jan 2020



**The Harrow in
Bishopstone
has reopened!
See page 4**



**Campaign
for
Real Ale**

Newsletter of the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch of CAMRA

avw.camra.org.uk

Est. Readership 6000



MARLOW ROYAL BRITISH LEGION



WINTERFEST 2019



CIRCA 18 CHRISTMAS & SEASONAL BREWS

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Friday 13th December 11.00 ~ 23.00

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NEWS FROM THE EDITOR



Another remarkable two months have passed!

A Brexit deadline has been and gone and we are all now preparing for the upcoming General Election. To try and find out what our potential MPs think about our pubs, we have been asking candidates to sign up to **CAMRA's** pledge for pubs. As we went to press, we had only received two replies so far and these are reported in the National News section below. Any further replies will appear on our website before the big day on Thursday December 12th. Whatever your political allegiances please get out and vote

on the day - you won't be able to complain about the result if you don't!

Wetherspoons are set to celebrate their 40th anniversary. Forty years ago, on 9 December 1979, the first **Wetherspoon** pub opened in north London, in Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill. Formerly, it had been a bookies.

For the first month of trading, it was called **Martin's Free House** – after its owner, **Wetherspoon's** founder and chairman Tim Martin. Then, early in the new year of 1980, the pub was renamed **Wetherspoons**, after Tim's teacher, who'd taught him at school, when he lived in New Zealand.

They no longer own that pub and currently their oldest pub is the **Rochester Castle** (formerly **Tanners Hall**), 143-145 Stoke Newington High Street, London N16 0NY (pictured top right).

We have four pubs in the branch area which fly under the **Wetherspoons** banner, two in Aylesbury (**Bell and White Hart**), one in Beaconsfield (**Hope & Champion**) and one in High Wycombe (**Falcon**) following the sale of the **William Robert Loosley** which is now the **Chiltern Taps**.

This isn't the only fortieth anniversary as I moved to Aylesbury in the same year. I got involved with the local **CAMRA** branch in 1980 (and they've been stuck with me ever since) which means that I get to share with **Chiltern**

Brewery's fortieth birthday which also takes place next year, making them one of the oldest small breweries in the country. See future editions of **Swan Supping** as we celebrate this significant landmark!

Following up from the news we reported last issue, the £2.7bn deal for Hong Kong firm CK Asset (CKA)

to take over **Greene King's** almost 3,000 pubs portfolio has been approved by the pubco and brewer's shareholders. We will monitor the fallout from this deal in the many pubs in our area which may be affected.

This issue features the reopening of the **Harrow** in Bishopstone and the **Dinton Hermit**, Ford, both of which give us some hope as we continue to see pub closures around the branch area. We also feature an article about a visit to Colchester which is where I was converted to real ale in 1976 by a large dose of **Adnams Bitter** in the **Castle**!

My thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of **Swan Supping**, especially all those who contribute to our Local News section, and those who deliver the finished magazine to the pubs, breweries and festivals etc. Also, thanks once again to Colin Stanford for the cartoon.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!

David Roe, *Swan Supping* Editor

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NATIONAL CAMRA NEWS

Pledge for Pubs!

On 12 December, the UK will go to the polls for a General Election.

In 2017 **CAMRA** persuaded 774 candidates to pledge support for beer and pubs. As a result of this campaigning, 130 MPs were elected who had promised to speak up in Parliament on our behalf.

Our campaigning efforts work! We've seen successes with a beer duty freeze and new support for pubs facing high business rate bills.

However, there is always more to do and we need to make sure that beer and pubs stay on the political agenda in the next Parliament.

That's why we are asking candidates to sign up to our pledge for pubs:

Beer: Celebrate and promote great beer

Pubs: Support action to help pubs thrive

Consumers: Represent the interests of pub goers, beer and cider drinkers

On behalf of the branch, Mike Clarke has contacted all the candidates in the constituencies that cover our branch area, namely Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Henley and Wycombe.

As we went to press this has resulted in the following replies from candidates:-

Greg Smith, Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Buckingham, wrote 'Real ale being my drink of choice, I am a big supporter of **CAMRA**. I did used to be a member, but for one reason or another let it lapse, not out of any objection to anything the campaign was doing, more out of being a member of too many things. I always try to attend the **Great British Beer Festival** at Olympia and other festivals as and when I can.

We are very lucky in Buckinghamshire having some fantastic local breweries and I am keen to support and champion them all, alongside our great locals, if elected as the Buckingham MP on 12th December. I have

just been onto the **CAMRA** website to sign the pledge. Kind regards, Greg.'

A very supportive response from the Green candidate in Henley - Jo Robb (via Twitter). 'I received an email from the **Campaign For Real Ale** and of course I and the Green Party support our pubs and real ale. I am happy to endorse your aims and give my wholehearted support for our pubs. Best wishes, Jo. We have pledged to reduce VAT on food and drink served in pubs, bars and restaurants. Our MP, Caroline Lucas, is a big advocate for pubs. I wish you well in your campaign!'

That's all we have as we go to press! If other candidates have responded and we haven't received it please email branchcontact@avw.camra.org.uk and we'll endeavour to put it on the website and social media as well.

National Pub of the Year

The four finalists for the **National CAMRA Pub of the Year (POTY)** are the **Bell**, Aldworth, Buckinghamshire, (pictured below), the **George & Dragon**, Hudswell, North Yorkshire, the **Red Lion**, Preston, Hertfordshire and the **Swan with Two Necks**, Pendleton, Lancashire. The winner will be announced next year and will feature in **Swan Supping**.



THE REOPENING OF THE HARROW IN BISHOPSTONE



On Friday 25th of October the **Harrow** at Bishopstone reopened after having been closed for seven years.

Just west of Aylesbury, this pub, which dates back to 1837, closed in December 2012.

With a large garden and surrounded by open fields it was ripe for development. After lengthy discussions over planning applications, several new houses have been built surrounding the pub which has however been saved. This is mainly due to the efforts of its proud proprietor, Sarah Aldous (pictured left) who lives opposite the pub and had watched its sad demise.



The **Harrow**, which also features on our front cover, has been through a major refurbishment including extension of the building on three sides and a complete re-landscaping.

Renovations at the **Harrow** are now complete and they offer an extensive menu and are geared up for the festive season.

Real ales featured on a recent visit were *XT Four*, *Chiltern Gold* and *Beechwood Bitter*, and our photograph top right, featuring bar tenders Harrison and Beth, shows that *Vale Gravit* has also made an appearance.

Helen Meade and Josh Berk are in charge of managing the pub and the Head Chef is Neil Featherston.

The **Harrow**, 27 Bishopstone, Aylesbury, Bucks HP17 8SF
Tel: 01296 748478

Open seven days a week (11am to 11pm) and serving food all day until 9:30pm.

Details of menus and festive offerings can be found at theharrowbishopstone.co.uk.



APPLYING THEIR CRAFT!



Located towards the bottom of Marlow High Street at No.77, the **Crafty Taproom** is a new venture for owner Mr. Phil Reeve, 'Bringing Craft Beer to Marlow'. Having taken over former premises where Coffee Copia once resided, renovation work has been undergone to alter the former coffee restaurant to the new ongoing concern that is now the **Crafty Taproom**. After a 'soft opening' on Wednesday 20th November for invited guests, it fully opened its doors on the following day.

Two real ales (*Loddon Hulabaloo* and *Mad Squirrel Mr. Squirrel*) plus a further eight craft beers were on duty for imbibers

over the opening weekend. Craft beers from breweries *Buxton*, *Double-Barrelled*, *Fishers*, *Loddon*, *Mad Squirrel*, *Mad Yank*, *Moogbrew* and a collaboration brew between the *Cloudwater* and *Salt (Saltaire)* breweries, quirkily named *Is There Room in the Budget for a Sports Car* (4.6%), were all on parade and available through the newly installed taps.

All the best for this new venue on the real ale and craft beer scene in Marlow that will bring trade into the town that some of the other nearby drinking establishments will benefit from. The more the merrier! The **Crafty Taproom**, 77 High Street, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL6 1AB
Mobile (07368 576565) E-mail-info@craftytaproom.com

Bert Farce



QUENCHING YOUR THIRST



We have heard from Gary Hall who has recently launched a new fire-engine-themed outside bar in the area based around Risborough.

It's a mobile bar with a fire-engine as a backdrop which is a fully working vehicle capable of putting out any fires with a bar alongside it. He sells *Brakspear Gravity* as a draft real ale plus a chilled lager and cider along with some wines and spirits.

Brakspear/Marstons have been kind enough to support him with point of sale material, and the girls at *Wychwood* call him Mr Brakspear as he is a very regular customer there. He's looking at doing a *Rebellion IPA* keg to see if that works with beer drinkers. The fire-engine does seem to attract a lot of interest!

His links with Brakspear go back a long way! He was born in Henley and his grandmother worked in the *Brakspear* household in the 1920s where she and the cook would spend idle evenings enjoying Mr Brakspear's personal barrel and he would get quite concerned that it emptied rather too quickly.

He is due to appear in Princes Risborough High Street for the Christmas Lights switch on 30th November complete with blue lights!



CHILTERN BREWERY CHRISTMAS SHOP OPENING



Left to right; Tom Jenkinson, Roger Protz, Giles du Boulay, Bruce Seymour, David Roe, George Jenkinson

Chiltern Brewery's Christmas shop in Terrick was opened on Saturday 9th of November 2019 by Giles du Boulay, CAMRA Brewery Liaison Officer for Chiltern, who had been invited to cut the ribbon and say a few words of welcome.

Giles paid tribute to the brewery, founded by Lesley and Richard Jenkinson in 1980, one of the first microbreweries in the country and now the oldest independent brewery in Buckinghamshire. Giles noted with grateful pleasure that many of Richard's original award-winning beers are still going

strong such as *Chiltern (Pale) Ale*, *Beechwood Bitter*, *Bodger's Barley Wine* and *John Hampden (Golden Harvest) Ale*.

Giles also noted that such was the renown of the brewery that Arriva even specially runs a bus service from Aylesbury and High Wycombe to the brewery with the route named after one of their beers: *Three Hundreds (Old Ale)*!

He went on to pay tribute to Lesley and Richard's two sons George and Tom, now the directors of the brewery, not only for keeping the traditional high quality brews going but also for the many superb and innovative, special and seasonal beers they have added to the

portfolio over recent years.

The opening was a jolly and festive occasion. The assembled throng, including notably the writer, journalist and CAMRA campaigner Roger Protz, was treated to carol singers then generous samplings of *Chiltern Christmas Ale* (note the bounty of flagons in the above photo) and their latest *Imperial Stouts*, gins and liqueurs as well as locally made mince pies and Christmas pudding.



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LOCAL NEWS

ASHENDON

The **Hundred of Ashendon** hosts two events in December. On the 12th it is the venue for Sloe Noveau, an opportunity for customers to taste and judge sloe gin made by villagers and on 14th they host the annual charity auction which funds events in the village throughout the year and contributes to the maintenance of the parish church. All are welcome to both events. The pub continues to provide a good selection of well-kept real ales, all *LocAles* from *Vale*, *Chiltern*, *Tring* and *Rebellion* and has been awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand so it is worth visiting for great drink and food.

AYLESBURY

Great news: the **Bricklayers Arms** has *Fuller's ESB* (5.5%) on again. *ESB* stands for 'Extra Special Bitter' which is exactly what it is: a classic, first brewed in 1971 and 'Champion Beer of Britain' in 1978, 1981 and 1985, and it is not now found elsewhere in Aylesbury. Des at the **Brickies** is putting this on once again in the hope that folk will drink it rather than fight shy of its strength. Get down there and drink it! You will not be disappointed.

After many years managing the **Hop Pole**, Ian Matthews has now taken on the tenancy there. This change has resulted in the shop at the pub closing, but other than that the range of well-kept ales from *Vale* and guests from all over the country continues as before along with a range of pub food created with fresh locally sourced ingredients.

Kick-start 2020 at the **King's Head** with their *Celebration of Porters, Stouts, Old and Dark Ales!* Running throughout January 2020, or until the beers run out, the celebration will feature some of the finest dark beers that Britain has to offer.

This year will be their eighth celebration and they have had exciting dark beer suggestions from *CAMRA* members, as well as non-members and are always happy to receive suggestions for next year's beers throughout the year. The popular Passport, used at their last celebration is back again. Use the Passport to record your thoughts on the celebration beers as you try them, as well as to collect stamps from the bar for each celebration beer bought, so you

can claim your free pint after ten and **Chiltern Brewery** Friday Tour Voucher for two, after twenty pints.

The **Old Millwright's Arms**, quite apart from its wonderful and constantly changing range of real ales, is a superb community pub. Take Sunday evenings there for example, each month they have 'Drink & Draw', 'Folk Night', 'Open Mic' and Comedy Night'. The landlady Liz Hind is standing as Labour candidate for Aylesbury in the general election.

BEACONSFIELD

The husband and wife team of Daniel Crump and Margriet Vandezande-Crump will reopen the **Greyhound Enoteca** pub and restaurant. It has been closed for a number of months for refurbishment, but we have no date for the reopening as we go to press.

BIERTON

Sadly both the **Bell** and the **Red Lion** are closed for the time being. Both their websites indicate they are still open for business but phone calls to their respective numbers, as stated on their websites, are met with 'the number you have dialled has not been recognized'. A sorry state of affairs indeed.

BOURNE END

A recent Saturday night visitation to **KEG Craft Beer Tasting Bar** (12 Oakfield Road) unveiled *Villages Lagoon* (4.3%), *Gipsy Hill Baller* (5.6%) and *Left-Handed Giant Back Again* (7.0%) amongst the two cask ales and seven craft beers on parade.

CADSDEN

The **Plough** is under new management and has been undergoing refurbishment. It is due to reopen in time for the Christmas season.

CHINNOR

A good range of real ales has been available at the **Red Lion** over the last two months, including three ales from *4Ts* brewery and continued brews from *Rebellion*.

Locals are looking forward to the annual visit by the Towersey Morris Men, scheduled this year for 8:30pm on the 12th December and the traditional Xmas Quiz on 16th December is already fully booked. Landlord Ian is looking to get barrels of seasonal *Winter Royal* from *Rebellion* and the popular *Old Peculiar* from *Theakston's* onto the pumps before Christmas is over.



DINTON

Christmas came early to the **Seven Stars** in Dinton this year with a significant refurbishment to the restaurant and tasteful changes to the bar areas (pictured below).

The colourful lights on their 18 foot Christmas tree will be switched on by a local celebrity on Sunday 8th December at 16.30. Mulled Wine, Mince Pies and other goodies for the kids make this a lovely family occasion while log fires burn bright to keep the winter cold out and traditional carols complete this festive scene. That same evening our traditional bumper Christmas Quiz takes place commencing 7pm with prizes for all teams and crackers to make the event go with a bang! Currently available on tap are *Rebellion IPA* alongside *Vale Best* and *Red Kite*.

EMMINGTON

At the **Inn at Emmington**, *LocAles Rebellion IPA*, *Vale Try Line* and *Animal Hop Kitty* were found at the **Inn** on the last *Swan Supping* visit. The festive menu is now online, being served between 30th November and 22nd December (pre-orders only). There is live music on both 6th and 20th December.

GREAT KIMBLE

The historic **Bernard Arms** was demolished in the space of a couple of days at the start of October (see picture above). All that remains on the cleared site is a single tree. Planning permission has been given for private housing, bringing to a sad end a long history of the site opposite St. Nicholas's church being the location of a pub. Frequented by Prime Ministers and dignitaries staying at nearby Chequers and variously called the **Bear and Staff** as well as the **Bernard Arms**, there's evidence of a local hostelry dating back at least to the early nineteenth century.

HADDENHAM

This year the *Winterfest* is on December 14th from 12noon to 6pm (last entry at 5pm). It's moved to the Haddenham Junior School where the *Summerfest* is held - a different entrance but it will be signposted. This has given them a bigger space to play with so they've taken the opportunity to spread out a bit.

Winterfest offers the opportunity to taste 40 top quality ales from near and far as well as fabulous ciders, gins and wines - including the mulled variety - in a spectacular Christmas Party

atmosphere. Wear your best Christmas Scarf and Jumper, bring friends and family, and groove the afternoon away to great music from local bands. As always, superb artisan food stalls will be providing the nourishment to help satisfy your appetite.



Winterfest wouldn't be *Winterfest* without the Haddenham Mummers making random appearances, which tend to become even more random as the day goes on and the beer goes down, so go online to www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk for more info, tickets and special deals or just turn up on the day and join in the fun! Advance tickets are also available from local pubs and shops. Christmas starts here!

A planning application for change of use from a public house to a single residential dwelling has been posted outside the **Green Dragon**. Plans to turn the pub into a community-run inn failed earlier on this year.

HIGH WYCOMBE

The **Bootlegger** closed on Saturday 9th of November and we understand that a major refurbishment will take place. A licence application in the name of *Innovation Pubs Ltd* is now being displayed outside the pub.

The **Junction**, which closed last year, looks like becoming another lot of flats that don't have a nearby hostelry.

A further addition to the long list of the town's pubs that have closed is the **Pheasant**.

MARLOW

Town centre emporium **Baroosh** (56-58 High Street) only had one cask ale on recently, but it was a rather moreish *Left On Red* (4.8%) from *McMullens* experimental brewing side nano brewery *Rivertown*.

Up the road at chef Tom Kerridge's





Butcher's Tap (15 Spittal Street) the two real ales showing at present are **Greene King** house beer *The Hand & Flowers* (3.9%) and **Rebellion** November monthly special *Wing Man* (4.2%).

The ever popular **Chequers** (High Street) boasted **McEwan's** *Head Space* (4.2%) brewed at **Charles Wells**, a tasty ale, conditioned in wooden whisky casks, plus **Brakspear** *Gravity* (3.4%) and **Oxford Gold** (4.0%) with the fourth ale being **Marston's** *Sweet Chariot* (4.8%). Among the five craft beers available from the Churchill Bar at the pub was **Wiper and True** *Milk Shake Stout* (5.6%).

Street-corner public house the **Marlow Donkey** (Station Road) had a welcome guest ale on in late November, boosting their range of **Greene King** ales. Surrey based brewery **Hogs Back** had their flagship brew *T.E.A.* (Traditional English Ale 4.2%) on handpump.

On Saturday 23rd November, the **Royal British Legion Club** (Station Approach) welcomed **CAMRA** delegates from around the region as they hosted the quarterly Central Southern Regional Meeting. Amid the eight real ales on offer there were four from Derbyshire, notably **Bartleby's** *Ribbon Ox* (4.3%) and **Drone Valley** *Stubble Stout* (5.2%). Final preparations for their upcoming beer festival in mid-December **Winterfest 2019** are ongoing with over twenty ales from some rare and small independent brew-pubs and breweries being showcased. Real ale list on their website www.rblmarlow.co.uk (See full page ad in this issue).

For this year's Remembrance commemorations, **Stardust Brewery** based in White Waltham, Berkshire, were approached to brew a unique beer for the month of Armistice. Head brewer Ben duly obliged and brewed a full gyle of twenty-four firkins of a new Best Bitter titled *We Will Remember Them* (4.0%), in collaboration with the **Marlow Royal British Legion Club**. This new brew was launched at the club on Friday 11th October, at the start of the month of Armistice, culminating on Remembrance Sunday when three handpumps and a further beer from the wood on gravity dispense, were available for purpose and fittingly imbibed during the club's annual Remembrance Day gathering of the towns' folk, local dignitaries both from the town and Marly-le-Roi, Marlow's twin town in France.

The **Stardust Brewery** delivered casks of *We Will Remember Them* to various other watering holes in and around the

Maidenhead area, a barrel was donated to the **Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe** annual beer festival in late October from the club, with three casks even venturing up to Chesterfield, North Derbyshire to the two **Brampton Brewery** tap pubs in the town, namely the **Rose & Crown** and the **Tramway Tavern**. Profit from the sales of *We Will Remember Them* from the eight firkins sold at the club, will be donated to the National Poppy Appeal from the **Marlow RBL Club** Committee via the Branch Committee.

PRINCES RISBOROUGH

The **George and Dragon** was closed as we went to press last issue. The 'Lease This Pub' sign outside suggests that new tenants are still being sought and it remains closed.

The **Whiteleaf Cross** changed management at the end of October. According to its website it is no longer owned by **Greene King** but is part of the **Meet and Greet Pub Company**. It is the first of the small chain's pubs in our branch.

STONE

At the **Rose & Crown** they used to brew *Willy's Brew* on-site and until recently they were brewing at **Hillfire** before they sadly closed down. They are currently speaking with a number of brewers about using their facilities to continue brewing.

THAME

Christmas is coming and so is the **Cross Keys** Christmas Quiz and Carol singing. Wednesday 18th December is the day to quiz and karaoke. A very popular evening so arrive early to get your seat. Quiz starts around 8.00pm.

At the **James Figg** and the **Thatch**, Tom and Ev have had their early Xmas

present in the shape of Oskar (the Nordic spelling apparently) who arrived early November. Congratulations to the both of them. No sign yet of any special beer to celebrate this!!!!

The **Rising Sun** has a new beer on at the moment. **McEwan's** *Headspace*, a 4.2 whisky infused beer. This, according to the website, is only sold in bottles, but here it is on a handpump. Other beers are **Hobgoblin Gold** and **Brakspear Gravity**.

WING

The **Queen's Head** offers three great local ales: at the time of writing – **Tring Squadron Scramble**, **Horne's Triple Goat Pale Ale** and **XT Thirteen**. The pub also regularly hosts events such as Thai nights, a book club, wine tasting, local heritage meetings and jazz evenings. The food is first class and their homemade bread & butter pudding with marmalade ice-cream is to die for...

WOOBURN

Rebellion IPA, **Wychwood Hobgoblin** and **Purity Mad Goose** were the three ales found on a weeknight visit to the **Old Bell**.

Elsewhere, the old **Queen & Albert**, now renamed **Gray's Inn** was serving **Timothy Taylor Landlord**, **Rebellion IPA** and seasonal *Crash Landing*.

Finally, the recently-refurbished **Red Lion** had **Timothy Taylor Landlord** and something called *Red Lion Best Bitter*. When pushed on the brewer, the barman stated it was made by a local brewer 'but not **Rebellion**' but wouldn't divulge anything further!



BEER SCORING IN 2020

The next few weeks are a busy time for pubs. Our readers will no doubt be enjoying the seasonal cheer.

And what a wonderful Christmas present idea for enthusiastic beer drinkers would be the **2020 Good Beer Guide** - available direct from **CAMRA** and all good bookshops. It's fresh off the press but such is the process of publishing that, amazingly, the local branch needs to turn its attention to selecting deserving pubs for the 2021 edition. The selection process takes place in the first months of next year.

If you know a pub that serves great real ale you can submit beer scores to **CAMRA** to help give it the recognition it deserves. Being an organisation that greatly values the contributions of all its members, their beer scores are the starting point for consideration of a pub. So, it's vitally important that we have a comprehensive set of beer scores across pubs in the area when we start the process.

Any **CAMRA** member can submit beer scores for any real ale pub in the country (we receive many scores from visitors to the area and encourage our members to score other branches' pubs). Details on the way the scheme works can be found on the National Beer Scoring Scheme webpage on the **CAMRA** website: <http://www.camra.org.uk/nbss>

The simplest way of submitting scores is via **CAMRA's** online pub guide - What Pub. It takes mere seconds:

Go to <https://whatpub.com/>

Login to the site via the member login link on the home page (using the same logon details as the main **CAMRA** site. and

Search for the pub you want to score and an online 'Submit Beer Scores' form will appear on the right.

Enter date, score, brewery and beer from the drop-down option, press submit, and you're done.

Scores are between 0 and 5. A score of 5 should only be given in exceptional cases (where your tongue sings with ecstasy at the first and last tastes of a pint) with 3 for 'good' and 2 or lower given to beer that cannot be recommended to anyone – not even the most desperate beer ticker spotting a rare opportunity to cross off a rare pint of **Crofters'** *Dribbling*.



If there are any changes or inaccuracies a feedback form can also be found on the pub page to update the database.

If a pub has no real ale then, before berating the management for their economic illiteracy in missing a marvellous sales opportunity, remember to give the pub a 0 on the beer scoring system.

Other pubs that are capable of serving excellent real ale appear to think its drinkers like surprises. They're very wrong when it's the surprise of walking in and finding none available at all – pump clips turned round because the management haven't racked the barrels in the cellar in time or take a Lidl-style 'when it's gone, it's gone' attitude. Be warned, lackadaisical licensees: visits recording scores of 0 will significantly affect the pub's overall score.

Luck also plays a part in visiting pubs that keep serving from casks for far too long. Get one of the first pints and it may be great – less so if you turn up three weeks later to receive a pint of malt vinegar from that same, now rancid, barrel. Punish these crimes against beer by giving the appropriate beer score.

Trolls also beware. All scores must be from genuine **CAMRA** members and we have statistical techniques to spot voting irregularities.

We'd particularly like more scores from the more rural areas of the branch – such as those deep in the Chilterns and off the beaten track in the areas of the branch where people still need dial-up modems to get on to the internet. These are often where pubs are in danger of closure and would benefit most from recognition of beer quality. We have several very diligent regular beer scorers but the more scores we receive for the largest number of pubs the more accurate our figures will be.

We welcome all beer scores from any pub but areas that we'd be particularly interested in include east Oxfordshire (Chinnor, Tetsworth and environs) plus the south and west of Wycombe (Stokenchurch, Lane End, Turville, Hambleden), also north and west of Aylesbury (e.g. North Marston, Quainton, Marsh Gibbon, Waddesdon, Brill, Long Crendon and nearby villages).

Remember that one of the most effective Christmas presents you can give to a good beer pub might be adding well-deserved beer scores that nudge it into the next **Good Beer Guide**.

THE RETURN OF THE DINTON HERMIT



Having closed its doors to the public in December 2013 and lying dormant ever since, the future of the **Dinton Hermit** is now looking bright. Ownership of this historic pub has transferred to Mr Paul Mitchell, founder and Managing Director of **Moogies Limited**. The **Dinton Hermit** now joins the community of



Moogies pubs in the area which include the **Black Boy** in Oving, the **Eight Bells** in Long Crendon and the **Russell Arms** in Butlers Cross. Back in September, work started at the **Dinton Hermit** on a sizeable redevelopment of this historic landmark (pictured top right) which will entail the repair, refurbishment and extension of the venue.

Starting with the bar and restaurant areas, these have been extended to include a new vaulted ceiling conservatory as well as some additional informal seating in the bar area. During the refurbishment, great care has been taken to maintain the original features of the building whilst sensitively creating a contemporary feel that blends the old with the new. This phase of the redevelopment



will be completed at the end of November with the pub officially reopening on November 30th.

Paul says 'We're dedicated to creating a friendly atmosphere that puts the customer at the heart of everything we do. We've got a terrific team on board, all passionate about warm hospitality and great service. We welcome families, food aficionados, dog walkers, local residents and those from surrounding towns and villages alike!'

They plan to offer great craft ales and quality wines coupled with an extensive menu that has something for everyone and cooked in their brand new kitchen (pictured left). A Christmas menu and New Year's Eve Party are the first special events with lots more to come!

Looking ahead to 2020, there are big plans for the large garden to be landscaped to create several distinct and attractive seating areas, providing the opportunity to eat and drink outside. There are also plans to refurbish the accommodation which will comprise a total of eleven bedrooms.




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FRIENDS, ROMANS, BEER DRINKERS



Colchester is the oldest recorded town in England, the first city built in England by the Romans and scene of their famous battle against Boudica's ancient Britons. At the start of November, we, a small intrepid group of ale-drinking wild men, followed in the footsteps of our ancestors and set out on a boozy Saturday incursion.

Colchester has two stations. One called Colchester Town which is near the town centre. The other is plain Colchester, which is, er, somewhere else. It should really be renamed

Colchester Out of Town because it's nowhere near anything of interest but it's sadly where all the fast trains stop. On the day we visited, overhead line problems had put the Town station out of action, so we felt like modern day Romans traipsing the mile or so into town before even a sniff of a pint.

Because of its historically strategic location on the North Sea coast, I'd naively imagined Colchester would be flat. How wrong I was. The town centre stands atop a knee-crackingly steep hill. The Romans weren't stupid. If the ancient Britons were as in need of a pint as us once we'd climbed it, then they'd have been easy to subjugate.

The Norman Colchester Castle now stands on the site of the Temple of Claudius, well worth a visit for its fascinating extensive collection of Roman mosaics and artefacts. Nevertheless, unlike many popular ale destinations, Colchester seems well off the tourist trail – sightseers heading instead for nearby Constable country. All the pubs we visited had an atmosphere geared towards local drinkers, not outside invaders.

First pub, because it was close to Colchester Town station, was the **Odd One Out**, a classic local dating back to the 1930s and little changed since. **CAMRA** tradition often terms such pubs 'backstreet' but not the **Odd One Out**. It's on the corner of a busy main road on a hill leading out of the town centre.

Despite having been opened out, the pub still retains a multi-roomed ambience. The bar separates the regionally significant heritage interior into distinct areas. The furniture and décor unashamedly hail back several decades, being rather reminiscent of Coronation Street's **Rover's Return** in Bet Lynch's heyday.



There was no leopard print in evidence when we received a most friendly welcome from Emma behind the bar, giving local tips for the rest of our crawl. The pub offers an excellent selection of ales (pictured above), including three from the local **Colchester Brewery**. I chose their *Metropolis* and *Number 1*.

Despite our arrival just after midday and being the day's first ale drinkers, the beer was in perfect condition. We'd seen Emma pull it through all the handpumps at the start of the session, clearing out the beer that had remained in the pipes overnight. This ought to be standard practice. Sadly, 'first pint syndrome' is a hazard in too many pubs. Ignorant, penny-pinching or lazy bar staff will often serve tepid, lifeless beer that has festered in the lines for hours.



Google Maps sent us the wrong way to the **Abbey Arms**, requiring us to vault over the central reservation of a dual carriageway to earn our pint of *Colchester Barbarian*. A recent refurbishment appeared to have left the pub more of a sports TV and pool bar but the ale was fine.

Heading up the hill towards the castle we stopped off at the extraordinarily old **Queen Street Brewhouse** (pictured left). Dating back six hundred years, the pub is cosily bohemian, serving vegan Sunday

roasts and offering an eclectic selection of vinyl records for customers to choose to play. 'Free Nelson Mandela' by the Special AKA greeted our arrival. There's a huge selection of Belgian beer, some on tap, and I sampled a couple of very unusual real ales: *Mr Bee's Pollen Power* and *Calvors Brewery Calypso Pale Ale*.



By contrast, around the corner from the **Queen Street Brewhouse** is the **Three Wise Monkeys** (pictured above). It's a smart new bar — all picture windows, metal chairs, stripped back brickwork, bare floorboards and shiny tiles behind the bar. It's not exactly your traditional **CAMRA** local (most customers seemed to be dining) but the beer was unusual and well-kept. My choices were *Buxton SPA* and the house *Other Monkey's Shadow So Huge*.

Colchester town centre has a core of old, narrow, pedestrianised lanes, which is where we found the **Purple Dog** (pictured right). Even at half-past three in the afternoon it was heaving with drinkers. Despite the wacky name (it was previously the **Clarence**), it's a bustling, traditional pub with a good selection of ales, including my pint of *Woodforde's Volt* (below), and a nice line in fish-finger sandwiches.



Next it was back over the dual carriageway to a cluster of ale-drinkers' pubs slightly to the south-west of the centre. The **New Inn** is a no-nonsense, multi-roomed boozer that appears to have won every local **CAMRA** award going for the past few years. A blackboard lists the many real ales, mostly from microbreweries and we enjoyed the blast of heat from a blazing log burning stove. I was a little disappointed with my half of *Divine* from **Bishop Nick** but another **Colchester Brewery** beer, *Bearded Lady*, went down very well.

The nearby **Fat Cat** is another drinkers' paradise with a wide range of ales on offer. It featured another welcoming fire, sturdy wooden tables and two of my favourite ales, *Hop Back Summer Lightning* and *Crouch Vale Brewers' Gold*.

Directly opposite the **Fat Cat** is the **Ale House**, carpeted and a little plusher than its neighbour but with plenty of interesting ales to tempt a **CAMRA** member, including my pick, *Wolfe T* from **Flack Manor**.

Sadly, this concentrated real ale nirvana was the other side of town from Colchester 'Out of Town' station, requiring a route march up the town centre hill and down again. Unfortunately, Simon, one of our brave soldiers, was temporarily lost in action, the victim of a large bottle of Belgian beer in the **Fat Cat**.

Halfway between the centre and the station is the **Victoria Inn**, providing a welcome pit stop. Another frequent **CAMRA** award winner, this is a large but homely pub with several rooms surrounding a central bar. Again, it was packed out with an early evening crowd. I had to squeeze into the bar to order my *Skiffle* from **Shortts Farm Brewery**.

And so, after a satisfying sortie, we latter-day beer warriors headed for our chariots, courtesy of Greater Anglia Rail, ready to return for another campaign.

Mike Clarke



LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

Chiltern Brewery

The 2019 vintage of Imperial Stouts sees the return of the iconic *Export Original* (9.5%) plus the introduction of two new varieties - *Gingerbread* (8.5%) and *Royal Vanilla* (8%). There is a limited number of each stout available, so it is well worth getting your hands on a few bottles whilst there are plenty to be had. The brewery's annual offering of Christmas Ale Flagons and *Festive Foxtrot* (on draught only) are two other welcome returns.



Looking ahead though, **Chiltern Brewery** have reason to be cheerful for what 2020 holds... it's their 40th year of brewing! Head Brewer, Tom Jenkinson, told us 'We've been looking forward to this momentous occasion for some time now, it's hard to believe that the time is finally here! We have a number of exciting, limited edition brews planned that both celebrate our brewing heritage and toast our commitment to brewing innovation. We're kick-starting the year with a Ruby ale in cask that we're sure ale drinkers will love!'

Malt The Brewery

For their seventh birthday, **Malt The Brewery** have just done something quite extraordinary.

Forget Dragon's Den or the many traditional online crowdfunding platforms. This is crowdfunding...the **Malt** way! The idea came about when a backdated hike of their business rates gave the business a huge debt.

Founder Nick Watson said 'At first it looked like that was it, the end of the road, after almost six years and before we'd even made a profit', but



thanks to huge support from members of the brewery club, the Maltsters, a very understanding landlord, local MP, Dame Cheryl Gillan and Chiltern District Council, against all the odds they found a way through the crisis. In April they were once again debt-free.

It was a real turning point. They realised the premises were just too big to stay a small artisan business and moving was out of the question. So it was time to go big or go home.

Co-Founder, Jenny Watson said 'Having been 100% debt-free for our whole history, rather than go to a bank or institutional lender, we decided to bring our most loyal customers on the journey with us.'

So, in September **Malt The Brewery** audaciously announced its ambitious plan to raise £250,000 in return for 15% of the business, inviting only Maltsters to take part.

'It was a big-ask, given the economic climate and political situation, right in the middle of Brexit, so the stakes were high', said Nick Watson. 'We were confident that we had an extremely high level of engagement with our customers... The **Malt** is not just about sharing great beer or ales. Lifelong friendships have been made here'.

Local Resident, Bob Scott agreed and told us 'There's a real community element to the brewery and Prestwood is richer for it'.

In the space of just seven weeks, Maltsters raised a huge £225,000 to transform the brewery, create jobs for local people and build an even better community asset.

Investor, Graham Auld said 'They don't just have exciting plans, they now have a hugely powerful team of engaged people from different backgrounds and with some extraordinary skills to share. Every investor will have an important role to play in growing the business and influencing the value of our investment'.



A signal of the brewery's commitment to driving sales in the local area is the launch of their first **Dayla** exclusive beer - **Malt Kings**. A Christmas special, **Malt Kings** is an easy drinking 4.0% amber ale where malt is the star and three wisely selected hops bring gifts of flavour! Limited edition casks available to trade customers exclusively from **Dayla**.

Rebellion Brewery

December's beer is *Top Gun* (4.2%), an easy-drinking well-balanced pale ale with a pleasing hoppy aroma. Brewed with exclusively 100% Maris Otter pale ale malt for a clean and crisp base. British hops First Gold and Goldings add citrus and floral notes. American Citra added to the hopback adds a distinct aroma of grapefruit and tropical fruit.



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MORE LOCAL BREWERY NEWS



Roasted Nuts Extra (5.8%) is back in 500 ml bottles. A deep ruby, complex and flavoursome winter warmer, packed with intense and distinctive malt and hop character.

Winter Royal (5.4%). A deep, ruby winter warmer at 5.4%, with a rich maltiness, soft bitterness and a fantastic late and dry hop aroma.

Before *Rebellion* even existed as a brewery, *Winter Royal* was brewed by the *Wethereds Brewery* in Marlow, becoming one of their flagship beers until the brewery closed in 1988. In December 2016 *Rebellion* got hold of the recipe and brewed a batch, reviving this famous beer after a 28 year hiatus.

They are planning to have *Winter Royal* from the 1st to the 24th of December in 1, 3, and 5 litre containers and their 22 pint mini barrels. They will have also a limited number of 500ml bottles which will be in gift packs and mixed cases.



Tring Brewery

Tring's seasonal beer for December is *Santa's Little Helper* (4.8%). A warming winter ale, this festive special is the perfect balance of roasted malt and premium aroma hops. This tippie would warm even the cold heart of Scrooge.



The monthly special for December is *Little Donkey* (3.8%). Gloriously festive, this amber-coloured special beer is low in alcohol but full on flavour.

After a year of using hops from all around the world *Tring* have returned to one of their all-time favourite English hops, First Gold. A classic aroma.

Vale Brewery

Love it or loathe it, Christmas is on its way, and to see us through the festive season, *Vale* have three special ales available offering something for all tastes:



Christmas Star (3.6%) which is dark copper, *Five Gold Rings* (4.2%), a golden ale and *Good King* (5.0%) a mahogany beer.



A number of new brews are on the horizon, to be enjoyed throughout the winter months including *Best Buy* (4.3%) which is light copper. Premium ale style with intense roast malt flavours. Rich biscuit aroma with hints of honey on the nose.



Not to be left out in the dark - *Aylesbury Brewhouse* has a new limited edition ale for Christmas.



Elf? (4.1%) is an amber-coloured

ale - a cheeky little character to ease us into the merriment of the season!

Further ales to welcome the New Year are on their way.....

XT Brewery

XT have made a significant new hire for their Head Brewer! Starting in January the new chief of beers is someone with considerable experience, having worked in some of the biggest names in the industry. More will be revealed in the next edition.

XT are getting involved in the planning for the 2020 *Oxford Beer Week*, a week-long celebration of beer which will run from the 8th to 17th of May

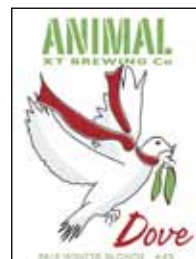
with a big festival of local beer on Saturday 16th May to be held at *TOAD (The Oxford Artisan Distillery)*.

For the festive season, *XT* have a quartet of special winter ales for your drinking enjoyment:



The ever popular *XT-25 Xmas Ale* at 4.7% is a rich amber winter ale, slow brewed for a deeper, smoother flavour.

A brace of *Animal* festive ales in dark and light will be available in the Yin and Yang of *Rook* and *Dove*.



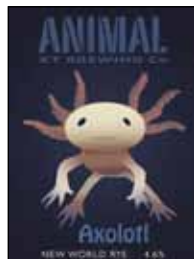
Rook is a 4.6% full-bodied black oat stout, carefully brewed to match and offset against the *Dove* which is a very pale, triple hopped blonde ale.



And if that's not enough festive fun, there will also be a new seasonal bottle ale - the *Snow Kitty* which is a stronger, winter version of the ever popular pub puss, *Hop Kitty*.



Alongside the festive beers the *Animal* range will be joined by the little *Axolotl* - this little chap is a rye beer balanced with a whole load of new world hops.



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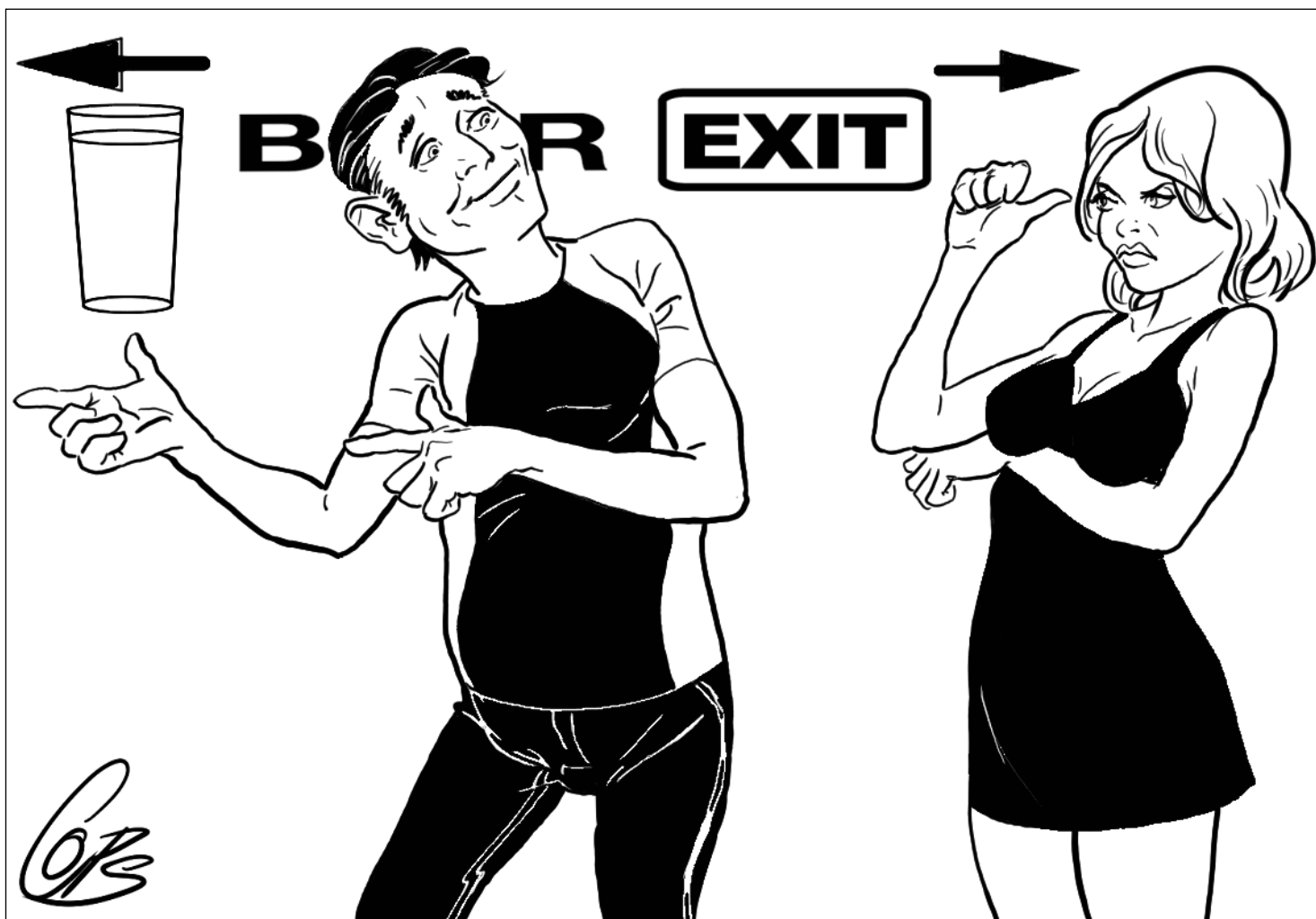
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THE CASKITEERS - PART NINE

On a dark and depressing Thursday morning in December Harry picked up the post from **Eaten Trifles**' doormat. Mixed in with the bills and final notices was a postcard with an airmail stamp.

'Cripes! It's an analogue Instagram post!' Harry exclaimed to Ruthie the brewer as he tossed the remainder of the post into the wastepaper bin. He examined the postcard carefully, staring at the glossy side featuring a palm tree and then turning it over to puzzle over the inky markings on the other.

'It's called handwriting,' Ruthie said helpfully.

'The photo's a touch static but you have to admit it's a damned sight thinner than even the iPhone 11,' Harry said, impressed. 'It's from Jakes. He must have bribed the prison guards at Paradise Peninsula to send a message out. Could you do the honours?' he pleaded with Ruthie.

She held the postcard and read: 'Harry, old chap. General Pina Colada wants a mere ten million dollars to prevent me undergoing the forced cockroach feast. Be a good egg. Pop down to the cash machine and take it to his apartment in Knightsbridge. Oh, and good luck with the Shackney Challenge.'

'No way,' Harry said decisively. 'If he had an ounce of common sense, he could have avoided this. What rotten luck that Jakes has been banged up in a sweltering tropical prison cell for financial jiggery-pokery when it's the blasted Shackney challenge.'

'What is this challenge?' Ruthie insisted.

'It's the annual competition between the craft beer bars on Shackney High Street,' Harry said. 'A celebrity judge visits us all and awards the winners the coveted *Shackney Hipster IPA* Trophy. It's bragging rights for the whole year! I can't let Wills win it again.'

'So, we knuckles down and brew a great wee beer?' Ruthie suggested.

'I fear it's too late to play by the rules,' Harry declared. 'Desperate situations call for desperate remedies. I need to find the number of Alexander the Great Liar.'

Alexander the Great Liar was, naturally, an alumnus of Harry and Jakes' alma mater. He was such an inveterate and habitual fibber that rumour had it that he even lied about his own name.

'I've always thought of Alexander as a bumbling, obnoxious oaf,' Harry confided to Ruthie. 'But his underhand and shameless tactics came up trumps at school in the ceiling game.'

Overweight and dishevelled, Alexander shambled into **Eaten Trifles** on the first day of the challenge and made a beeline for Thea, Jacob's girlfriend who was successfully drowning her Jacob-related sorrows with a quadruple Jackfruit and Seitan infused gin and tonic. 'Jakes always said it was of the utmost importance to keep my pecker up.'

Undeterred by the subsequent slap across his face, Alexander talked tactics with Harry.

'Who's your most feared competitor?' he asked. 'The one who truly deserves to win?'

'*Pebbledashers*, obvs,' Harry admitted. 'They're way better than us.'

'Here's what we do,' Alexander said. 'We go out when no hipsters are awake at nine in the morning the day the judge comes to asses them and we swap their sign with yours. The judge is fooled into thinking your rubbish craft beer bar is *Pebbledashers*.'

'Genius,' Harry agreed, sinking a half of *Cashew and Asparagus IPA*.

'And what's their prizewinning beer?'

'Everyone knows their *Jerusalem Artichoke and Bone Marrow Gueuze* is to die for,' Harry replied.

'Maybe literally once I have a little word with my Vlad!' Alexander said with a conspiratorial laugh. 'A few drops of his magic potion and no one will ever touch their beers again!'

Pebbledashers mysteriously closed down on the eve of judging after a mysterious spate of dysentery ripped through their customer base.

Taking advantage of the rivals' closure, Alexander stood on Shackney High Street attempting to drum up trade for **Eaten Trifles**.

As a pair of twenty-something women emerged from the tattoo parlour he launched into his sales pitch: 'Of course the **Eaten Trifles** IPAs are not only organic but they confer unique aphrodisiacal qualities. Look at me, I'm a fountain of fertility. Do I look like a man who knows how many children he's fathered? Not on your Nellie.'

Undeterred by the women's appalled reaction, he buttonholed a couple of bearded, red-trousered hipsters passing on the pavement: 'At **Eaten Trifles**, we have dozens, no hundreds, no thousands, gazillions of splendiferous craft beers all on tap. We can make them for you, while you wait.'

Alexander soon whipped up a queue of customers, all waiting impatiently at the bar of **Eaten Trifles**, expecting their own outlandish beers, like *Pistachio Porter* or *Jellyfish and Jackfruit Mild* to be made on the spot.

Ruthie grabbed Alexander by the neck and took him gently aside. 'What's this 'Make a beer while you wait'? Don't you know that beer has to ferment?'

'Well, er, Elijah Shazam, Aristotle girdle-grunt, erm, for how long exactly?'

'A couple of weeks, including maturation,' she replied.

'Jeeps, I didn't say exactly how long the gullible fools, I mean, customers would have to wait, did I?' Alexander rationalised. 'Business opportunity! We can install beds. Brilliant.'

At that minute the bar hushed as the celebrity judge entered **Eaten Trifles** with a posse of young hipster acolytes chanting 'Jezza! Jezza!'

Ruthie reverently handed the judge an eighth-of-a-pint glass of *Colombian Liberica Porter*.

Jezza sipped, gnominically stroking his grey beard. 'Hmm. Adore the coffee notes, maybe play down the alcohol aspect? Maybe to zero?'

Ruthie handed him a second glass, a *Sphagnum Peat Moss and Echinacea IPA*.

'I venerate the vegetable extracts but it would be better served from a porcelain vessel with a handle and spout and complemented with a dash of organic sheep's milk,' Jezza pronounced. 'Like at that lovely shop down the road – Tease Maid.'

Ruthie reached the end of her tether and strode forward. 'Och, Jezza. Isn't that you're only pretending that you like craft beers to fool us all. You're a secret teetotaler. You cannae judge craft beer bars or craft beers for your life.'

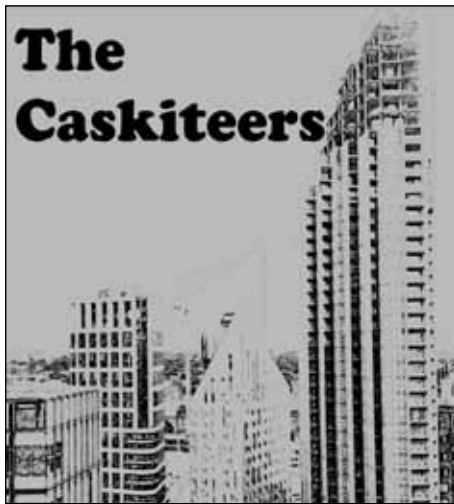
'Damn, you rumbled me. Yes, indeed, I am truly repulsed by all beer. Notwithstanding, I am an honest broker in this endeavour,' Jezza replied, putting his hand on his chest. 'And actually, I have a noble vision to nationalise all the craft beer bars along Shackney High Street and bring in a single Workers' Pint at the reasonable price of ten pounds a serving. Very reasonable for Shackney. It will naturally be luminous red in colour and no more than half a percent alcohol – that's enough fun for anyone. And the grateful drinkers will collectively grow the hops on their allotments. Cheers!'

Hearing his victory might be at risk, Alexander became suddenly and uncharacteristically enraged, his bluff persona slipping. 'Hold on Jezza, you can't do that. I promised my hedge fund backers that I'd personally ruin all these craft beer businesses myself. My friends will then buy up the freeholds and build oodles more luxury flats for Vlad and his chums. We don't need your help in destroying the economy of Shackney.'

'I want to destroy it my own way,' Jezza yelled.

As Alexander and Jezza squared up, Ruthie picked each up with one hand and threw them both, still scrapping, into the night of Shackney High Street.

Charlie Mackle



Branch Diary

Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!

December

Monday 2nd INFORMAL BRANCH MEETING

7.00pm, Bird in Hand, Princes Risborough

Tuesday 10th BRANCH CHRISTMAS MEAL

6.00pm for 6.30pm, Black Horse, Lacey Green

If you wish to join in, please book in advance with the editor (£5 non-refundable deposit required).

Friday 13th AYLESBURY CHRISTMAS PUB CRAWL

Starts 7.00pm Hop Pole

Saturday 14th HADDENHAM WINTERFEST SOCIAL

12 Noon Haddenham Community Junior School, Woodways HP17 8DS

Tuesday 24th AYLESBURY XMAS POST-SHOPPING SOCIAL

12 noon, King's Head

Tuesday 24th WYCOMBE CHRISTMAS EVE SOCIAL

Start 7.00pm Chiltern Taps, 7.45pm Rose and Crown, 8.30pm Mad Squirrel, finish 9.15pm Heidrun.

Monday 30th THAME PUB CRAWL

Start 6.30pm Six Bells, 7.15pm James Figg, 8.00pm Cross Keys

January

Monday 6th BRANCH MEETING

7.00pm, Belle Vue, High Wycombe

Saturday 18th LUNCHTIME SOCIAL

12 noon, Cross Keys, Thame.

Saturday 25th REGIONAL PUB CRAWL

Borough/Southwark, start 12 noon Waterloo Tap

March

Monday 2nd BRANCH AGM

7.00pm Kings Head, Aylesbury. More details next issue.

Further details can be found on
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Swan Supping is distributed free of charge to pubs in the branch area.

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Copy deadline for next issue (due out 31st January) is 13th January 2020.

Subscriptions :- *Swan Supping* is distributed to over 250 pubs and many other locations in our area but if you would prefer to receive your copy by post we can mail it to you immediately it is published. All you have to do is send £1.50 for each edition you wish to receive to the Editor at the address above (please make all cheques payable to **CAMRA AV & W**) and leave the rest to us! This applies to single copies to UK addresses only. We can mail overseas, but the price will vary depending on the country to which it is to be delivered. Remember that all issues of *Swan Supping* can be downloaded from our website (avw.camra.org.uk).

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