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Swan Supping

Issue 106

Feb/Mar 2015



KING



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FOR
REAL ALE**

**COVER PICTURE
The brewing
team at Malt the
Brewery!
See page 13**

Newsletter of the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch of CAMRA

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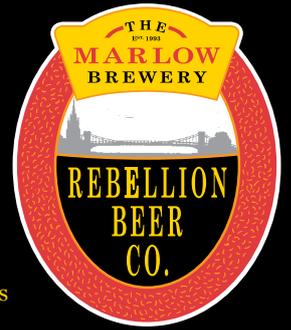
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NEWS FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the first edition of *Swan Supping* for 2015 (where on earth did 2014 disappear to?).

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate our neighbouring *CAMRA* branch, *Slough Windsor & Maidenhead* who celebrated their 40th anniversary at the *Bear* in Maidenhead in January. I'm only sorry I couldn't make it to the festivities as the bus companies don't feel there is a market for providing buses to the High Wycombe area after 6pm. I'm quite sure they managed very easily without me!

As usual at this time of year, we have to decide on our *Pub of the Year*. We are asking for *CAMRA* members to vote for their favourite pub from the six nominations pictured on page 5.

These six have scored the best in the votes entered over the last year using the beer scoring system on the web. So this means that if your favourite pub is missing from the list, and I must admit there are quite a few pubs that are surprisingly absent, then get voting this year and try to ensure it is not missing from next year's poll. These votes are also used to decide which pubs go into the *Good Beer Guide*, so there is no excuse for *CAMRA* members not to get involved. I know that we have mentioned beer scoring many times, but if you have any questions don't hesitate to get in touch (my contact details are on page 18), or refer to our last issue (available to be downloaded from the web at www.swansupping.org.uk) which covers the subject in great detail.

We are holding our Annual General Meeting at the *King's Head* in Aylesbury on Wednesday 4th of March. The meeting itself will start at 8pm, so it is advised to get there by 7.30pm in order to enjoy a pint beforehand and then get a second (or third) in time for the start.

All local *CAMRA* members should try and attend as this is your chance to have your say about how we have done over the past year and help set the direction of the branch over the next twelve months. This is the first time that we have held the AGM on a Wednesday evening as we have listened to several members who have found coming along on the usual Monday night very difficult. We will just have to see how it all works out.

A buffet will be provided which we traditionally fund by holding a bottle raffle. These bottles are donated by the members, so please bring a bottle or

two along with you if you can. The raffle will be held after the meeting has finished while we enjoy the buffet and more ale from the *Chiltern Brewery*, including the *Chiltern Black* which is now available all year.

This year is very important as the old guard is changing as our chairman for the last four years, Alexander Wright, is stepping down from the post, and then stepping up (hopefully) to the National Executive of *CAMRA*. I'd like to thank him for all the work he has done leading the branch and wish him every success for the future. This move won't prevent him from taking part in branch activities and contributing to the magazine, so we will still see him when his new duties allow.

Swan Supping Subscriptions

For those readers who can't get to one of our many outlets to pick up *Swan Supping*, we operate a subscription service. Details are given on page 18, but it works out at £1.50 per issue. Back issues can also be ordered at the same price (most issues are still available), but if you let us know in advance that you are attending a Branch Social, then we can arrange for requested issues to be brought along for you for free!

In Conclusion

Many thanks, once again, to all those who have contributed their time in writing, taking photographs, proofreading and delivering *Swan Supping* to pubs, clubs and breweries. Special thanks to *Malt the Brewery* for providing our front cover and to Colin Stanford for providing us with a splendid cartoon - let's hope he was overly pessimistic regarding the weather!

Please remember that we are all volunteers and we may not get it right all the time, but we always try and do our best. So if we slip up and you haven't been getting your regular editions of *Swan Supping*, please bear with us and give us a *gentle* reminder!

Cheers! *David W. Roe - Swan Supping Editor*

BRANCH AGM
King's Head, Aylesbury
Wednesday 4th March (7.30pm for an 8pm start)
Buffet and Bottle Raffle
ALL local CAMRA members
should try and attend

A STATEMENT FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



I have been involved with the *Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch* of *CAMRA* since 2006, holding several different roles on the committee, but I am sad to say that this year's Branch AGM will be my last as Chairman.

Over the last four years I have had a very enjoyable time leading the branch in our campaign for Real Ale, Breweries that make it and Pubs in which to drink it, in the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe area. I have enjoyed meeting members, publicans, brewers and fellow drinkers, and represented *CAMRA*'s point of view to MPs and councillors.

I am standing down for two reasons: First, I feel that it is time for me to pass on the baton. I strongly feel that new people bring new ideas, and that is vital to a campaigning organisation.

Second, I have the opportunity to move on to pastures new in *CAMRA*. I am standing for election to *CAMRA's National Executive* - our board of directors. I will welcome your vote should you make it to the *National AGM and Members' Weekend*, something I heartily recommend!

The members' weekend is not just a chance to vote on amendments to *CAMRA* policy. It is the chance to meet other members from around the country, to exchange views and campaigning tips, as well as to enjoy the extensive members' bar - larger than many beer festivals, go on brewery trips, and visit nearby pubs.

This year it is being held in Nottingham between 17th and 19th April. There are a number of us travelling there from the branch; please get in touch if you would like to meet there.

Apart from elections to branch positions, our somewhat smaller branch AGM will give local members the opportunity to discuss our campaigning for the year. We promise you won't be given things to do if you turn up! Strictly volunteers only. I hope to see your support. Open to *CAMRA* members, 7:30pm for 8pm start. *King's Head*, Aylesbury on Wednesday 4th March.

Cheers!

Alexander Wright

NEW MANAGEMENT AT THE BLACK BOY



The **Black Boy** at Oving (pictured above) is now under new management. Ian and Lisa Mendola have taken on the freehouse and they have a background of years of experience providing front-of-house service as Ian also runs the **Crown** at Gawcott. Local lad Ian Rallison (pictured serving below), originally from Aspley Guise, has been recruited as manager.

The restaurant has views over the large and picturesque gardens (pictured top right) which flow practically seamlessly into the Vale of Aylesbury. It is rumoured that the Hossle or village pond, situated at the bottom of the pub gardens, was used as a camp by Oliver Cromwell and his New Model Army after sacking nearby Bolebec Castle at Whitechurch.

Situated in the heart of rural Buckinghamshire, five miles north of Aylesbury, this 16th Century pub, which was closed for many months needs to build up its trade by offering consistently good food, fine wine and real ales. They have three handpumps and currently serve *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Side Pocket for a Toad*, making good use of the local *Tring Brewery*, plus a traditional cider.

Their chef, Paul King, in residence at the **Black Boy**, produces a menu using locally sourced produce which is available on their website (www.theblackboyoving.co.uk) and various specials are offered on a daily basis.



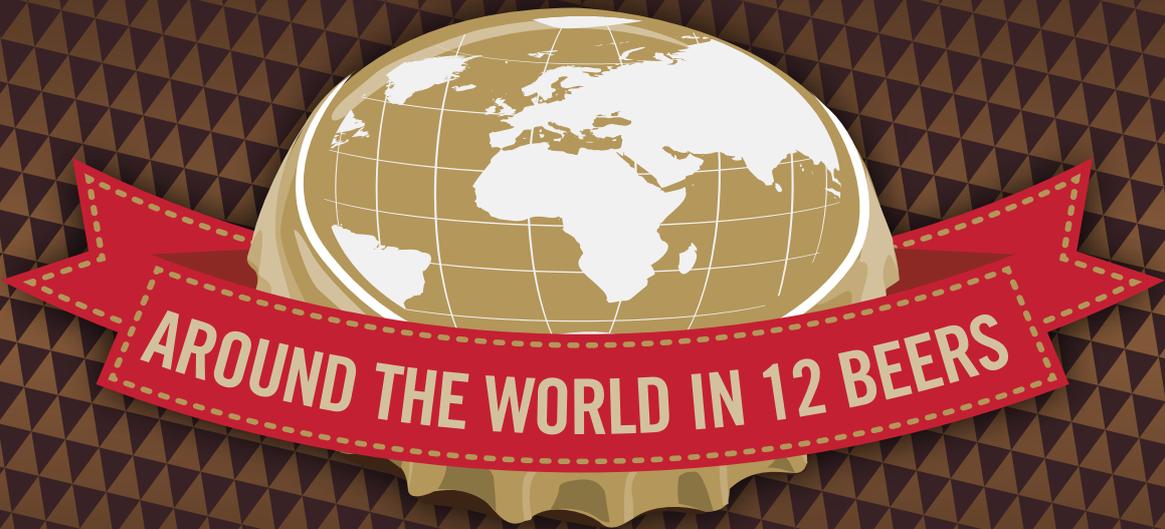
Locals are apparently only returning slowly after ten months of the pub being closed. The refurbishment was extensive and took three months, but it looks very nice indeed.

The **Black Boy** was built in the early part of the 16th Century. The original building is still standing and has two open fires, an open bar area, a snug with sofas and a large extension housing the restaurant area which can seat approximately fifty people.

It is fantastic to see this lovely pub in 'Ooving' reopen. Its pretty location, garden and unbeatable views, should ensure it great success, especially in summer.

David Roe (Photos: *Bill and Adam Piers*)

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VOTE FOR THE PUB OF THE YEAR!

Over the past year **CAMRA** members have been scoring the branch's 270 real ale pubs. Over 4367 scores have been submitted with the pub with the most scores having 541! Members' scores are an important part of **CAMRA's** campaigning, enabling the branch to locate the very best pubs around the area.

We will be using these scores very shortly to select the entries for the next edition of the **Good Beer Guide**; They are also used to create the shortlist for the 2015 **Pub of the Year**.

We are asking all **CAMRA** members to vote for their favourite pub from the shortlist of six:



Le De Spencer Arms, Downley.



Three Horseshoes, Burroughs Grove.



Old Millwrights Arms, Aylesbury.



Wheel, Naphill



Farmer's Bar @ King's Head, Aylesbury.



Royal Standard, Wooburn Common

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LOCAL NEWS

ASHENDON

The **Hundred** regularly serves *Tring Side Pocket for a Toad, XT 4* or something from *Vale*, the next one being their new recipe 3.7% *Best Bitter*. In the near future *Chiltern Beechwood* and *Black* will be available to ring the changes. This is a good *Locale* establishment with a talented chef in residence.

AYLESBURY



The **Hop Pole** has won the *Bucks Herald's Pub of the Year* competition, taking 31% of readers' votes, beating eleven other finalists who had been nominated by the public. Landladies Lyndsey McCloy and Hayley Reader were presented with a plaque (pictured

above) by Bucks Herald editor Roger Hawes on Monday 19th of January.

The **Hop Pole** is also starting up a food discount scheme and would like to offer it to *CAMRA* members. It would be a discount of 25%. All they need to do is produce their *CAMRA* membership card upon ordering.

Chiltern Black, which is now available all year round, can be enjoyed in the **Farmers Bar** at the **Kings Head** along with joining in their celebration of porters, stouts, dark and old ales which continues through February.

If you are reading this just after the date of publication, you still have chance to catch the *Red Squirrel* brewery take-over of the pumps at the **Old Millwrights Arms** over the weekend from Friday 30th of January to Sunday 1st of February.

The runner-up in the *Bucks Herald's Pub of the Year* competition was the **Queens Head**.

The **Steeplechase**, the last remaining pub on Southcourt, was demolished in January. Another one gone for good!

The **White Swan** is still closed but it is now the subject of a proposed refurbishment. Further details on letting the pub are available from *Star (Pubs & Bars)*.

BENNETT END

We were sad to read in the Marlow Free Press that the **Three Horseshoes** is under threat from closure after plans to convert it into a house were submitted to Wycombe District Council by an Oxford-based property developer. The

council's decision is due next month, meanwhile the pub remains open for business.

BRILL

At the **Pheasant** you can currently enjoy *Sharp's Doom Bar* and *Skinner's A Very Pheasant Pheasant Ale* which is a mixture of *Betty Stogs* and *Splendid Tackle*. The next guest ale will be *ABC The Red Baron*.

The **Pointer** offers *XT Pointer* (3.8%), *Vale VPA* (brewed in the village), *Raw Brewing Company Euro IPA*, and *Brightside's Darksides Stout*. Coming up shortly are *ZigZag Dark Chocolate Stout* and *Dark Star Pale Ale*. The pub always has a stout or porter on offer.

BUTLERS CROSS

The **Russell Arms** is currently closed, having shut its doors in the first week of January. We understand that this village owned pub, which had appeared to be a success, will reopen soon as the local committee that owns and runs the pub are currently in discussions with the current tenant and plenty of others very willing to take on the tenancy.

CHILTON

At the **Poachers Pocket** local support has now increased throughput of ales to the extent that Nancy can have two firkins on handpump of 100% *Locales*, although *Otter Bitter* made an appearance recently. In the summer she hopes this may increase to three. *Malt the Brewer* and *Vale's* monthly special are regular offerings. She hopes the village fête might make a return this summer.

DINTON

The **Seven Stars** keeps *Vale Best Bitter* at £3:10, *Rebellion IPA*, and *Timothy Taylor Landlord*.

FORD

The **Dinton Hermit** has now been closed for over a year and there is no news in the village about it reopening or any plans for 'change of use'.

GRANBOROUGH

On recent visits by local *CAMRA* members to the **Crown**, they not only enjoyed the food but also had up to four ales to wash it down with. The ubiquitous *Sharp's Doom Bar* was on offer with *Chiltern Pale Ale*, *Marston's Pedigree* and *Vale Wychert*. A good pub worth visiting although the bus service could be better.

HADDENHAM

At the **Kings Head XT 4** is taking over from *Fullers London Pride*. Normally *Sharp's Doom Bar* and *Brakspear Bitter* are also permanently available. *Bay's Up 'n' Under* and *St Austell Ruck & Roll* will be on for the Six Nations.

The **Rising Sun** gets through nine or ten firkins a week of mostly *Locales* with all the usual suspects featuring. Two to three real ciders are also available. A *Vale* week will be held to celebrate their 20th anniversary.

The **Rose & Thistle** now buying ales through *Hawthorn Leisure* rather than *Greene King* which allows Spas to offer the likes of *St Austell Tribute* or *Sharp's Doom Bar* in addition to the *Greene King IPA* that doesn't rotate.

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The **Twist at the Green Dragon** offer **Timothy Taylor Landlord** and **Black Sheep Best Bitter** as permanent features with a third from the **Enterprise** list.

HIGH WYCOMBE

It looks as though High Wycombe is likely to lose another pub after plans to convert the **Gordon Arms** in Gordon Road into housing were submitted to Wycombe District Council by a property developer.

A decision on whether to give planning permission is likely to be made by council planning officials in March, so there is still time to object. Wycombe has lost more than enough pubs already with the **Nags Head** to be converted into a hotel, and the **Downley Donkey**, Downley, which has been converted into a Morrison's Local store, along with other closures.

ICKFORD

At the **Rising Sun** the four permanent beers are **Hooky**, **Black Sheep**, **Adnams Southwold Bitter** and **Broadside** plus a guest goes on every Thursday such as **Tring Side Pocket for a Toad** or **St Austell Tribute**.

KINGSWOOD

The **Akeman Inn** (formerly the **Crooked Billet** and pictured above (photo by Bill Piers)) serves an interesting range of ales with **Ringwood Boon Doggle** and **Forty Niner** on handpumps recently.

The **Canaletto Italian Restaurant & Public House** (formerly the **Plough & Anchor**) serves **Sharp's Doom Bar** and at least one **Locale** such as **Vale Gold** or **Hook Norton Hooky**.

LONG CRENDON

The **Churchill** serves **Sharp's Doom Bar** and **XT 4**. As the pub is named after the great man whose death fifty years ago is being remembered this year, perhaps it might be a fitting place to go to in order to raise a glass to his memory.

MARLOW

The **Coach and Horses** in West Street underwent a major refurbishment and reopened at the end of November as the **Coach**. On a recent visit the real ales on offer were **Wells Burning Gold**, **Rebellion IPA** and **Young's Bitter**. We're unsure what happened to the horses.

MILTON COMMON

The **Three Pigeons** are holding their first beer festival from Friday 6th to Sunday 8th of March.

OAKLEY

At the **Chandos Arms**, **Sharp's Doom Bar** is a permanent fixture with something a bit different on the other pump. **Bays Up 'N' Under**, **Exmoor Gold**, **Fullers London Pride**, amongst others, could all feature in the coming weeks.

OVING

The **Black Boy** is fully operational and heading to offer a third ale on hand pump. **Sharp's Doom Bar** will be a staple with a **Locale** alongside. When visited recently **Tring Side Pocket for a Toad** was available.

STEWKLEY

The **Swan** had a change of management in early December. Alan and Wendy Hardiman are the new people at the helm and have been in the trade for 18 years. Previously they were at the **Green Man**, Shepreth near Cambridge, a **Greene King** tenancy, for 11 years and the **Bedford Arms**, Toddington, for two years amongst others. They intend no major changes, but to further the pub as a focal point in the village. The pub is now open all day every day and currently has four ales, regulars **Courage Best** and **Sharps Doom Bar** with two guests, currently **Theakstons Black Bull Bitter** and **Wells Bombardier**. Food is now available and events such as music and beer festivals are planned for the summer.

THAME

The **Birdcage** had **Rebellion IPA** and **Smugglers** when visited recently, while across the road at the **Spread Eagle**, they also had two **Rebellion** beers, **Cut Throat** (amber and fruity 4.2%) and their seasonal **Roasted Nuts**.

The **James Figg** continues to have four ales, this time being **Vale Best**, **XT 6**, **Purity Mad Goose** and **Doom Bar**. Also with **Doom Bar** was the **Black Horse** and they also have **London Pride** and **Brakspear Gold**. The **Nags Head** continues with **Greene King IPA** and at the **Swan Hotel** opposite, **Rebellion Downhill**, **London Pride**, **Reverend James** from **Brains** and, just for a change, **Doom Bar** was available.

At the Chinnor end of town, the **Falcon** had **Hooky**, **Old Hooky** and **Reverend James**, but check opening hours during the daytime. The evenings are as normal. The **Cross Keys** continues to have eight beers on, with **Locale** beers being available where possible. At the



last visit, they had **XT 4**, **Vale Gravitax**, **Animal Aghhhh** and the **Thame Brewery Hoppiness** as the local ales.

Moving on to the Oxford end of Thame, the **Rising Sun** had **Brakspear Bitter** as standard, the guest beer for the month **Ringwood Porter** at 4.7 and **Boondoggle 4.2**, the latter being changed on a regular basis. The **Thatch** had **Vale VPA** and **Doom Bar** (again) whilst the **Six Bells** had **London Pride**, **Bengal Lancer**, **Gales Seafarers** and **XT 4**.

Yet again, the variety of beer in Thame is excellent and the pubs varied in styles, many with roaring fires. Well worth getting Mr Arriva to do the driving!

TIDDINGTON

The **Fox & Goat** are sticking with **Sharp's Doom Bar** as their regular ale and rotating an **XT** product and a guest such as **Dark Star Partridge**. A stock of bottled **XT** beers are always available. The food side of the business, prepared by their Scottish chef, is going really well.

WADDESON

The **Lion** is a free house serving **Sharp's Doom Bar** and a variety of **Locales** and guests from around the country.

When visited recently, the **Long Dog** had **Leighton Buzzard Restoration Ale**, **Rebellion Roasted Nuts** and **Malt Prestwood Bitter** on offer, maintaining their philosophy of serving a range of interesting and local ales.

WINSLOW

The 10th **Winslow Beer Festival** takes place at the Public Hall, Elmfields

Gate, (MK18 3JA) on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st of March. There are three sessions: Friday Evening 7pm - 11pm, Saturday Matinee 1pm - 7pm (hopefully with Live RBS Six Nations Rugby being shown), and Saturday Evening 7pm - 11pm.

As ever, a varied selection of over 40 beers and ciders this year from around Britain.

This is a festival run by the Lions Club of Winslow and run as their major charity fundraising event for local charities, so come and 'Drink for Charity'.

Last year they raised over £9,000! Session entrance fee £5 includes a commemorative glass and programme. **CAMRA** card carrying members receive a complimentary drink voucher. Light refreshments available.

Tickets available in advance from 1st March from the **Bell Hotel**, Market Square, Winslow. More details are available on their website www.winslowlions.org.uk.

WOOBURN COMMON

The **Royal Standard** is holding a **St Austell** week from Friday 6th Feb through to the following Friday.

They will have seven **St Austell** beers on over the weekend and **Big Job 7.2%** and **Proper Job 4.5%** will be on for the whole week.

WORMINGHALL

The **Clifden Arms** is currently closed with a concrete block across its car park entrance. A sign outside shows that it is available to be let with **Fleurets**.

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AYLESBURY VALE VILLAGE PUB OF THE YEAR



The big award for Village pub of the year for 2014 went to the **Rising Sun** in Ickford, which also finished runner-up in the Best Family Pub category.

Owner Jan Thomas (pictured above with Paul Honour and the trophy) said: 'The team at the **Rising Sun** are passionate about keeping a traditional English public house that provides a great selection of well-kept real ales and serves fantastic, traditional, home-made food.

'We enjoy great support from our locals and regulars and in turn we encourage and promote traditional team pub games all year round.

'We are both proud and thrilled to have won this award and we'll work hard to continue with what we're doing.'

The **Unicorn** in Cublington won a special one-off award for its consistent excellence, while the previous year's overall winner, the **Seven Stars** in Dinton, received the Highly Recommended award.

The **Pointer** in Brill was chosen as the Best Food Pub, with the **Old**

Fisherman in Shabbington taking the honours in the Best Family Pub category while the **Rose and Crown** in Ivinghoe won the Community Pub award.

The competition, run by Aylesbury Vale District Council and sponsored by **Dayla**, celebrates the roles of pubs in the life of the village, as well as what they offer to the district in terms of tourism.

After much deliberation, the judges chose the winning pubs in a number of categories including Best Community Pub, Best Family Pub and Best Food Pub before deciding the overall winner.

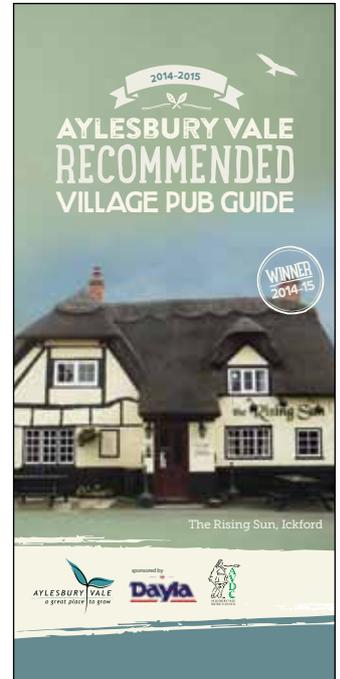
The winning pubs were chosen on the basis of their score from visits by mystery customers during which they were rated for aspects ranging from cleanliness and service to community activities and family facilities.

Councillor Pam Pearce, district council cabinet member for community matters and chair of the judging panel said: 'The standards were so high this year, and our competition has something to do with that.

'These are coveted awards and pubs work hard to win them.

'Well done to all the winners and indeed to all the pubs nominated by their communities.'

All the finalists are featured in the 'Recommended Village Pub guide', which is available to be downloaded from the district council website at www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk



Hidden Treasure Le De Spencers Arms



The 'Le De' is a little flint pub, nestling in the woods at the back of Downley Common surrounded by acres of beautiful AOB land with miles of trails. Making it the ideal refreshment stop after hiking or biking. Outside is a large children friendly garden while inside a warm, friendly atmosphere with an open fire, low ceilings and rustic beams. Landlady Sarah serves excellent home-cooked food alongside a great line-up of real ales and wines.

In addition to regular guest ales we stage popular beer festivals, visit our website for the latest.



01494 535317 www.ledespencersarms.co.uk
The Common, Downley, High Wycombe HP13 5YL

DEATH OF A PUB



The **Steeplechase** was the last remaining pub on the Southcourt estate in Aylesbury, following the demise of the **Greyhound** and the **Hunstman**.

Although it had been closed for many years, the fact that it was still standing meant that, although very remote, there was just that chance that it could reopen. That slight hope has been finally dashed with its demolition in January.

It closed in May 2008 after not getting the support it needed from the local populace with the smoking ban dealing the final death blow. Various landlords had tried their best to keep it going but it was always a wet sales pub without a decent kitchen area to allow it to move towards attracting a decent lunchtime food trade. The large garden did attract families in summer, but a series of damp summers did not help.

Sports on TV and a full-size snooker table, which made the pub unique in the branch, did not keep it open either, so now it's gone.

I, for one, will miss it. *David Roe* (Photos: *Alexander Wright*)



Lynn and Nigel welcome you to **THE BULL**

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CHEERS AND ENJOY!



Busted Out of Oxford

After fair-weather customers packing out pubs in the run up to Christmas and the nightmare on L-Plate drinker street (New Year's Eve, if you hadn't guessed), by the start of January some die hard ale-lovers are busting to get back to business as usual.

With the festivities finished, even the curmudgeonliest *CAMRA* member's drinking is brightened up by a pub crawl on the first weekend of the year. In the past we've visited exotic places in the January snow like the there-be-dragons country of St. Albans but one nearby city has so many wonderful alehouses that it exerts the gravitational pull of a *Dark Star*.

And with a bus service that connects the city of dreaming spires every 20 minutes to at least part of the branch at peak times of day it sucked us there again. Except this time we had the bright idea of combining our whirl around Oxford with a 280 bus crawl.



With an array of tempting destinations such as Headington and Wheatley (well, near Wheatley) as well as our own pulsating ale-hotspots of Thame, Haddenham and Aylesbury the 280 route is as blessed with excellent pubs as our own line 300 (subject of an extremely popular guide that the branch produced a few years ago).

With only a few hours in Oxford, the hardy crew of Dave, Simon, Noj and myself were restricted to the 'inner-circle' of *Good Beer Guide* pubs, sadly missing the watering holes of St. Giles's or Jericho.

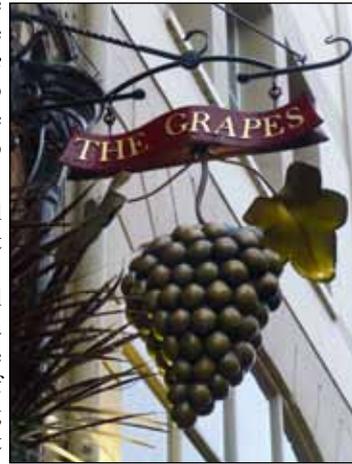


First stop was the splendid *St. Aldates' Tavern* which shares its name with the well-known thoroughfare. It's a long, narrow pub with six handpumps from which I was served a refreshing pint of *Dark Star Darkness* – a low-gravity ale in the style of a mild.

We'd tipped off the Oxford branch of *CAMRA* about our visit and we bumped into many of their number during the trip but three of them met us in the *St. Aldates'* and managed to put up with our increasingly lubricated company around all four Oxonic gems.

Down the hill and right was the *Royal Blenheim* – an *Everard's* house leased to *White Horse Brewery* which serves as their brewery tap. A good range of their beers was available, plus some guests, but I would have had to have been a fool not to go for the *Village Idiot*. The *Royal Blenheim* is close to *Pembroke College* and I think I'd be broke too if I was a student living so close to such a palace of wonderful beer.

Doubling back on ourselves, we headed through the shops to *George Street* and the *Grapes* – a *Bath Ales* house. This was where the Oxford branch had grouped in numbers and a glance at a notice on the bar surely hinted at the reason. Standing brazenly in front of a fount of five dead beers (including versions of *Bath's* own *Dark Side*) it read 'From The 'Evil' Keg: All Pints £4.95'.



While we weren't sure whether it was the prices or the brazen declaration that the beers were from the *Dark Side* that was most shocking, it seemed clear that the branch had gathered en masse in anticipation of a *CAMRA* exorcism to expunge the malevolent spirit of dead beer. Perhaps but the blasts of hot



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air coming from the air conditioning unit certainly gave the corner where I was sitting a feeling of the infernal.

Despite their evident foray into the sinful world of 'craft beer' *Bath Ales* still produce some of my favourite real ales and their winter special, *Festivity*, was available in vibrantly living form. It went down rather nicely.

We moved on to the **Chequers** on the High Street, away from the spume of the devil. Accessed via a narrow passage and open courtyard, this *Nicholson's* house might be the type of pub that theme parks would ship timber-by-timber to recreate their version of Merrie Olde England (complete with Coke and Fosters on tap). Fortunately the **Chequers** is the real thing and serves an amazing ten real ales, which were dutifully supped.



As every erudite American tourist in Oxford ought to know, the **Chequers** dates back to 1500 and was established on that very site by Henry VII because it was so convenient for the 280 bus stop to Aylesbury. Continuing the hallowed tradition of Arriva of the Shires we set off on our four-wheeled pub pilgrimage.

First alighting point was Headington shops, close to the **Mason's Arms** of inter-branch Aunt Sally fame. But in the spirit of exploration, we were trying somewhere new and, after a short walk north, arrived at the **White Hart**. An *Everard's* house built in solid stone, it looked like we'd wandered into a local in a Cotswold village. A couple of us had one of their filling pies for sustenance as well as pints of *Everard's Sleighbell* and *Sundancer*.

Then back to the bus, leaving Oxford behind and travelling into the wilds of the darkest countryside and next stop, Wheatley. Being early January it was dark well before the 6pm opening time of our destination, the **Cricketers Arms** in the adjoining village of Littleworth (requiring a fifteen-minute stroll or stagger) from the 280 bus route. The walk felt even darker than a pint of *Dark Star's Darkness* but, once we arrived, we were bowled over by the **Cricketers Arms**.

This is a genuine village local with a warming wood burning stove glowing in the bar, a sausage festival in February and so friendly they even turned the Christmas tree lights on especially for Simon. Moreover, they have a very no-ball policy of sourcing all their ales locally. It's a tempting prospect to return for the bangers and beers in a few weeks when we'd be able to see where we were going.

Fortunately our next pub was bang opposite the 280 bus stop – in our home turf of Tiddington. A visit to the newly reopened **Fox and Goat** was a highlight of the crawl – and we'd been looking forward to getting a look inside the revitalised pub. As reported in previous *Swan Suppings*, the renamed **Fox and Goat** (there was no hircine appendix previously) was rescued from its previous incarnation as an Indian restaurant and subsequent closure by a combination of new, local ownership.



The refurbishment is impressive and the pub is managed by **Oak Taverns** who have several other success stories in the local area. There's a room for dining to the right as you enter and a distinct bar area to welcome bona fide drinkers as they walk through the door – and features splendid local beers from the likes of *Vale* and *XT*.



The barn adjoining the main pub building is currently being converted to provide overnight accommodation. So close to junction 8A of the M40, this will hopefully bring in discerning travellers wishing to avoid identikit corporate hotels and enjoy a welcome that features local ales.

Our eighth, and last, stop was in Thame – a town where there are so many good pubs just along the high street that a decent pub crawl could be organised between two stops on the 280.

Tempted on the way by the chip shop on the High Street (which accomplished the unheard of feat of leaving Dave Roe unable to finish his portion) we headed to the **Cross Keys**. Packed as usual, it's a fantastic example of how enlightened management and a commitment to real ale can reinvigorate a pub and keep the success going.

After the **Cross Keys**, our Christmas and New Year excesses must have kicked in and satiated but not too worse for wear we were all ready for home. However, had Noj and I known in advance that our Chiltern Railways train south was delayed we would have stayed on the bus to the **Rising Sun** in Haddenham. A quick pint in Compost Corner and bracing walk to the station would have been infinitely preferable to sitting around in a beerless empty waiting room for forty minutes.

Mind you, we'd better not knock Chiltern Railways too much: in a couple of years' time they'll be running direct trains from Haddenham, Princes Risborough or High Wycombe to the centre of Oxford which will open up a whole new universe of public transport pub crawls. Until then, long live the line 280 and all who booze with her.

Mike Clarke



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LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

Aylesbury Brewhouse

Von Richthofen was WW1's fighter ace, revered and respected by both British and German pilots. *ABC's* red German wheat beer, *The Red Baron*, pays respect to the greatest fighter pilot of all time.



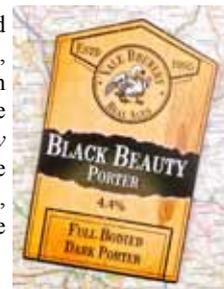
The next Limited Edition Beer coming from the brewhouse behind the **Hop Pole** is *Event Horizon*. An incredibly dark, rich ale used roasted malts for a gravity defying smooth taste.

Before the landing of England's Captain Cook at Botany Bay, Australia was discovered by the Dutch and declared as *New Holland*. Using the finest Aussie hops, this heavily hopped Australian IPA will be super hoppy for those hopheads, and dry hopped for good measure!



since the very first brew - the best Maris Otter malt, hops from Britain and around the world, quality brewers' yeast and fresh Buckinghamshire water.

Selected beers have also been refined and tweaked - *Red Kite's* abv has been increased to 4.3%, giving a fuller, more rounded flavour along with a handful more aromatic hops thrown into the kettle. Previously a seasonal brew, *Black Beauty Porter* has been made a permanent fixture as the revival of dark beers continues - an award winning, wholesome, full bodied 4.4% porter with intense roast malt flavours.



And the beers keep on coming! February sees the 2015 brew of *Lock, Prop & Barrel*, brewed to celebrate the Six Nations that'll be adorning the pub tv screens from Friday 6th, when Wales take on England at Twickers! This year's brew is a 3.9% tawny ale packed with six different English hop varieties. A well balanced session ale to imbibe whilst supporting your country!

Vale Brewery

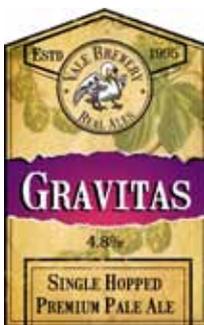
This year sees the 20th anniversary of brewing for the family-run *Vale Brewery*. Initially starting out life in Haddenham, they sold their first beers through the *Rising Sun* in the same village and the rest, they say, is history.



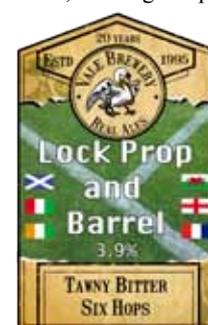
To celebrate two decades of brewing they've revamped their famous Buckinghamshire Swan logo, along with a new look for their pump badges, as well as bringing in new beers to their award winning range.

The new logo incorporates their heritage and experience of brewing, entwined with the development of the brewery as it grows in this new golden era for real ales. The botanically themed pump badges have been designed to communicate the four quality ingredients used by Vale

March sees the brewery jumping on the *Bandwagon!* A hand crafted craft beer brewed as a craft American style IPA with pale malts, creating a super hoppy, loud craft beer. One for you crafty hopmonsters!



Finally, the *Vale Brewery* website has been totally redesigned - www.valebrewery.co.uk - find all the information on their beers, what events are planned, and how to pick up beers from their brewery shop!



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MORE LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

Chiltern Brewery



The response of beer drinkers to **Chiltern Black** (3.9% vol.) as a seasonal winter ale has been so positive and favourable that the decision has been made to add it to their collection of permanent draught ales. For many years, **Chiltern Ale** (3.7% vol.) and **Beechwood Bitter** (4.3% vol.) have been the only permanent draught beers brewed, but now this dark, complex porter, or stout as many will refer to it, can be drunk throughout the year.

Black, smooth, beautifully hopped, with dark golden treacle tones and hints of roast barley, **Chiltern Black** also has wonderful chocolaty aromas and perfectly complements the pale, light and refreshing **Chiltern Ale** and the mid-amber nutty, fruity **Beechwood Bitter** to make a mighty trinity.

'This is a classic English beer style that deserves to be drunk 12 months of the year. We are so pleased that the demand is there now from beer drinkers locally to make this a permanent ale. We are witnessing a beer revolution led by a connoisseur public who appreciate and demand the very best in traditional beer styles' says Head Brewer Tom Jenkinson.

Chiltern Ale has also been renamed as **Chiltern Pale Ale**.

Malt the Brewery

There's no rest for micro brewers! **Malt the Brewery's** first brew of 2015 took place on Friday 2nd January. It was the ever popular **Prestwood's Best**. The brewery completely ran out of their **CAMRA** accredited bottle-conditioned ales over Christmas despite making much more than last year. In order to get bottles matured as soon as possible 'Team Malt' got straight back into brewing. The task was made a little easier as Suzie joined the brewing team.

All four of the core ales have now been brewed and hand bottled by the team in Prestwood. **Malt Prestwood's Best**, **Malt IPA** and **Malt Golden Ale** are all now back on the shelves in the brewery and local outlets. The double award winning **Malt Dark Ale** will be ready by the end of February.

Having got the core ales back in stock, Nick the brewer is now turning his thoughts to the next recipe. This will be the 10th Ale Malt The Brewery have brewed since starting two and a half years ago. It should be out in time for Easter.

'Team Malt' is pictured on our front cover and from left to right the people in the picture are: Nick Watson, Suzie Button (inside copper), Dave Yorston and Angus Wallbank.

Tring Brewery



This year sees another round of twelve finely honed monthly specials. After two years of using exclusively using UK hops, then broadening their horizons last year with hops from across the globe, they have learned a lot of lessons, especially when it comes to the more complex interactions between hops and malt. This year they will experiment more..

The theme for this years collection of monthly specials is local woodlands, and here's a couple of reasons why.

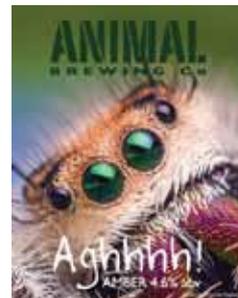
First off, the name Tring is believed to derive from the Anglo-Saxon words Tredunga or Trehanger, Tre', meaning 'tree' and with the suffix 'ing' implying 'a slope where trees grow' (thanks Wiki!).

Secondly eleven of the twelve names are taken from woodlands that fall within the Chilterns. 2015 sees the 50th Anniversary of the Chiltern Society who work exceptionally hard ensuring access to our beautiful countryside, so this is a nod to their hard work. The first person to email **Tring Brewery** with the woodland that does not sit within the Chilterns gets a free nine pint takeout.

The first of these seasonal ales is the 4.1% **Turlhanger**.

XT Brewery

The first new beer released for 2015 is the **Animal Brewing: Aghhh (Spider)**, a 4.6% amber ale, brewed as an Abbey style beer, using a specialist Belgian ale yeast. The last Beer Club night in December had some unplanned entertainment thanks to this new beer: as the vessels holding the fermenting beer were hissing and bubbling out over the sides of the tanks and across the floor. It has proved to be a rather more wild ale than the standard brews. The Beer Club members had been sampling early prototype versions of the beer and their feedback helped in its development. **XT** hopes to brew more beers in this style in the future.



The **XT** poppy appeal beer **Lest We Forget** sold very well and matched last year's fund raising. The brewery has been working with the British Legion and plans to widen the project further for the 2015 poppy appeal. More details later this year.

The annual special beer for 2015 is the **Fifteen**. This is an English IPA to celebrate the English hop growers who have been working hard to develop new varieties to compete with the strong aromatic and fruity New World hops. **XT** have been trialling some of these and decided it was time to release a new beer incorporating these new varieties. The new **Fifteen** joins the **Thirteen** which continues to be one of the most popular **XT** beers and last year's summer Saison refresher, **Fourteen**.

2015 is a year of several historical anniversaries including Agincourt, Waterloo and Magna Carta. **XT** is planning seasonal specials to mark these. Especially the Magna Carta which is of particular local significance as Long Crendon, where **XT** are based on the estate of Notley Abbey, was the seat of one of the most significant Barons behind the Magna Carta.



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NEW CHAPTER FOR THE POACHER'S POCKET

The **Poacher's Pocket** in Chilton, formerly **Chilton Club**, is open after suffering a bit of a downturn for a few years, and is fast becoming a thriving hub of the community. It's had a deep clean, lick of paint and a shift round and since May of last year is going from strength to strength.

Landlady, Nancy Taylor (pictured serving some of the locals), had been waiting for her chance to have the **Poacher's Pocket** for almost ten years and is very pleased to be there and putting all her ideas and plans into action along with her partner Dean. They aim to be a village local selling a wide range of lagers and supporting local breweries serving real ale at its best.

Real ale sales have almost doubled since opening with the pub moving on from small pins to firkins. Breweries supported so far include **Vale, XT, Malt, Adnams, Hanlons** and **Otter** to mention but a few.

Their working ethos includes utilising all the assets they have; a full size snooker table, pool table, darts and a large function room above that holds 200, with its own cellar-fed bar. They intend to revive lost traditions in Chilton that used to make the village a community. These include; bonfire party, village fête, keep-fit classes, children's birthday party venue, meat raffle, free entertainment, charity fund raisers etc.

It may sound a little corny but it's not always about the money, it's about being a valuable asset to the village and surrounding community. So far



giving back to the village has worked and they are weekly getting old faces back in and new faces who never knew they were here!

They have great support from their resident bowls club. There's both an outside bowls green used in the summer months and indoors bowls used in the winter. They host all their club events and fully refresh their practice days and they always welcome new members.

This year is looking positive with a busy calendar and many plans to put into action, such as re-landscaping the garden at the rear to make the

most of the panoramic views over the valley.

They have many events in the pipe-line, such as a sausage and cider festival, weekend of live music, motorbike day, vintage tractor rally, quiz nights and village fête to list but a few. A Sunday carvery is on the horizon but at present they are solely a wet sales pub but hope to ease into opening their kitchens to make Sunday 'the new tradition' for families and friends to catch up.

Here's to a good 2015!

Many thanks to Bill Piers for the photograph.



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ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE LANDMARK

600 pubs are now listed as Assets of Community Value in England - but campaigners say Government are letting communities down by allowing conversion of pubs to supermarkets without planning permission.

Swan Supping has featured several articles in past issues about registering pubs on the Community Assets Register. Nationwide we have reached our target of 600 pubs listed as Assets of Community Value, following a campaign to encourage local groups to register pubs as ACVs.

However with 29 pubs still closing per week more needs to be done to protect pubs - with the Government letting communities down by allowing conversion of pubs to supermarkets without planning permission.

‘The Government introduced Assets of Community Value to help communities retain valued community assets such as pubs by providing an opportunity to bid for the property if the owner intends to sell. But the scheme is undermined by rules that allow pubs to be converted into supermarket convenience stores and a wide range of other retail uses, without any need for a planning application.’ Tom Stainer, *CAMRA* Head of Communications.

Evidence collated last year revealed that two pubs a week are converted into supermarket convenience stores, which led to the launch of their ‘Pubs Matter’ campaign which asks the Government to close the current loopholes and ensure planning permission is always required to convert a pub to other uses.

The fact pubs are the most listed community asset shows just how much people value their local pub. It is therefore hugely disappointing that the Government won’t act to close planning loopholes which allow developers to convert pubs to other uses without the requirement for planning permission.

Planning permission is required to convert a convenience store into a pub but no permission is required to convert a pub into a convenience store. The lack of protection for pubs is a glaring anomaly in the English planning system which needs to be corrected. It is surely not right that a supermarket convenience store is given greater planning protection than a valued community pub.

For example, we have been told that the owners of the ACV listed **Bernard Arms** in Kimble have refused offers made for the pub by the community and are pressing ahead with planning permission to demolish this historic pub and replace it with houses.

Further, unless a pub is listed several weeks before a planning application is made, the planning decision will be passed before the ACV provision comes into effect. This is why it is vital to list all pubs, not just ones we might consider ‘under threat’.

As mentioned above, permitted development rights allow a premises to be changed from a pub into a shop, office or supermarket without planning permission being sought. The first the local community will hear about it is when builders turn up to install the shop fittings.

Tim Page, *CAMRA* Chief Executive says: ‘It is currently possible to convert a pub into a betting shop, pay-day loan store or supermarket without the need for planning permission, making it far too easy for pubs

valued by the community to be lost without local people having a say. Given the huge contribution that pubs make to community life in Britain we believe this cannot be right.’

Sadly, a new clause to the Infrastructure Bill in England, tabled by a cross-party group of MPs, has been rejected by the Government. The amendment would have closed this loophole - we shall fight on!

For the time being, if you value your pub, and don’t want it to suffer the fate of the **Steeplechase** in Aylesbury (see the article on page 9), please help by getting it listed as an ACV.

Either approach your Parish Council and ask them to apply for a listing, or fill out the form available on the branch website: www.swansupping.org.uk/campaigns/acv.

We will happily give help and advice, come and speak at your Parish Council meetings, and visit you in your local. Lets get all our pubs listed!

List them or lose them!

Alexander Wright

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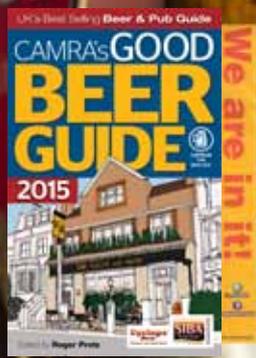
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GRAVEDIGGERS - PART THIRTY-THREE

It had been a winter for the record books. From Christmas Eve onwards the temperature plummeted. The mercury remained below zero for the whole of January (the mercury in the thermometer, that is, not the **Diggers'** secret beer flavouring) and icicles six-inches long hung from Old Moses's beard.

Snow fell – and settled – and almost made the view of the toxic waste dump, fracking test site, nuclear power station prototype and chicken eviscerating plant look almost picturesque. Well, that's what Old Pete had said after several pints of *Undescended Gonad* had turned him all wistful – as well as cross-eyed.

Throughout the country the appalling weather wreaked havoc with beer supplies and brewery conglomerate **Sinbed's** had been unable to source the hundreds of tanker loads of chemicals its keg factory required every day and, as a result, had introduced rationing of *Blandweiser*. This provoked a violent reaction in town-centre fizz-bars across the land with mindless mayhem visited on the streets every Friday and Saturday night – or perhaps that was *Blandweiser* drinkers' normal behaviour?

Access between the outside world and the **Gravediggers** was treacherous enough in the best of weathers – following a twisted road through a wood that was said to be haunted by the ghosts of **Diggers'** regulars who'd drunk quantities of *Toxic Sludge* that would have felled a shire horse. (This comparison may have led to the rumours that waste-products from these beasts of burden may have been responsible for giving the notorious brew its rather uncompromising taste.)

The road had been only intermittently passable for several weeks but that had little effect on the **Gravediggers'** regular trade – amongst the locals anyone who'd travelled out of the county was viewed with suspicion. Those who weren't related to at least twenty-three other villagers were regarded as outsiders who would never be trusted until they'd taken their own cousin up the aisle.

Neither did the winter isolation reduce production at the **Gravediggers'** microbrewery. True, stocks of malt and hops were running low, but the **Diggers'** beers had always been candidates for experimentation with 'unconventional' ingredients. The hostile conditions had allowed Old Moses to gain easier access to certain exotic adjuncts – he was able to walk over the ice into the middle of the old mill pond, cut a hole and scoop out the frogs, water snails, larvae and mud-dwelling worms that went into *Old Winter's Tadpole Tail* in much larger quantities than in a normal year.

As other breweries followed **Sinbed's** and were forced to dilute the alcoholic strength of their beers through rationing the malt content, wild rumours began to spread in ale drinking circles of an authentic olde world pub with a craft brewery hidden in an inhospitable valley over the hills. Soon tickers were taking to their skis and Nordic walking sticks and traversing the treacherous snow-covered slopes to seek out the **Gravediggers** for themselves.

This sub-zero trek might have led the ale explorers to collapse from hypothermia at any other pub but a pint of *Radioactive Half-Life* on arrival thawed out even the most frost-bitten.

Washing down a third pint, one of the alpine entrepreneurs wondered out loud about a strange phenomenon he'd spotted whilst descending into the remote valley. 'The funny thing was when we looked down from the hill, everywhere around the pub was buried under a six-foot snowdrift – except for the pub itself. You must have some good central heating.'

The ticker turned to see everyone in the bar wrapped up in layers of coats and scarves and trying to warm their hands on the rather puny fire.

'Central heating?' Old Joe asked. 'That's the last of Young Duwayne's drain cleaning rods that we're burning there.'

'Well, if it's freezing inside the pub, why is there no snow on the outside?' the ticker asked.



SHOPPING FOR THOSE NECESSITIES WHEN IT'S SNOWY CAN BE A HAZARDOUS EXERCISE

'Follow your nose,' Mazz said, rather cryptically.

The ticker tentatively strolled around the bar trying to identify the source of the pungent aroma which permeated the bar. 'The toilets?' he suggested, seeing a plume of purple gas escaping around the door frame.

'That might make sense,' the ticker's companion suggested. 'Because the only other place around here that wasn't completely covered in snow was the sewage works.'

'Oh yes,' James said. 'It's bizarre but you get used to it and we certainly don't complain about it – the mystery gas coming from the gents ensured the brewery's had a decent water supply the last six weeks – no frozen pipes or anything.'

'Excuse me,' an intense, bespectacled female skiing ale drinker interrupted from the other side of the bar. 'But I'm Professor Stella P. Chaser, world expert on the chemical composition of urine. I'd heard a trickle of rumours about this from infra-red satellite photo analysis but I desperately need to collect some samples from your facilities to help me with some important research.'

'Are you trying to take the—' but before James could finish his sentence, Dr Chaser had dashed into the gents with a stack of petri dishes and then swished straight out over the snowy slopes to the gasps of the locals and the other intrepid tickers.

A few days later and the cold snap had intensified further. Even old Moses was finding frozen vole droppings and solidified slug slime hard to track down. The wintry silence was suddenly broken by the deafening rotors of a military helicopter. It landed in the clearing in the snow next to the **Gravediggers**. Paratroopers spilled out of the Chinook and swarmed into the pub.

'Matter of national security,' the military commander barked. 'Her majesty's residence in the Highlands has been blanketed by a twenty foot snowdrift and it needs neutralising now.'

'But what has that got to do with the **Gravediggers**?' Mazz asked.

'Dr P. Chaser determined that the combination of organic ingredients from the primordial soup in the pond processed through the genetic kidney mutation caused by chronic inbreeding has created the most effective anti-freeze known to man. Now you, you and you –' the commander pointed at Old Pete, Old Joe and Old Moses '—get in that chopper and give 'em enough beer to float a tank and full bladders until we're over Balmoral..'

'Well, who'd have thought the **Gravediggers** ales would earn a royal appointment like that?' Mazz said. 'Take inspiration from our patriotic customers, *Blandweiser*!'

'I thought they had already,' James said.

Charlie Mackle

Branch Diary

Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!

February

Monday 2nd BRANCH MEETING AND GBG SELECTION
8.00pm Cross Keys, Thame

Thursday 5th KINGSWOOD AND WADDESDON SOCIAL
8.30pm Akeman Arms, 9.15pm Long Dog, 10.00pm Lion.

Thursday 12th SECRETARY'S SIGNIFICANT BIRTHDAY DO
8.30pm Swan, Great Kimble.

Friday 13th PRE LENT SOCIAL IN HACKNEY
12.15pm Café Maloka, (vegetarian) 62 Broadway Market for coffee or tea
12.45pm **Dove**, 24-28 Broadway Market, *East London Brewery* and other beers
13.30pm Either lunch at Broadway Market (pizzas, tapas, etc.) or **Cat and Mutton**, 76 Broadway Market (*SamBrook Wandle* and burgers)
14.45pm **London Fields Brewery Tap** 365-366 Warburton Street (not to be confused with **London Fields** pub) 5 handpump beers plus bottles.
16.00pm **Cock Tavern**, 315 Mare St. (5 *Howling Hop* beers, guest beers and ciders)
17.00pm **Pembury Tavern**, 90 Amhurst Road (6 or 7 beers from Milton brewery, pizzas, bar billiards).

Thursday 19th CHINNOR AND ENVIRONS SOCIAL
8.00pm Red Lion, 8.30pm Crown, 9.00pm Shepherd's Crook, 9.30pm Inn at Emmington.

Tuesday 24th PRESTWOOD AND GREAT KINGSHILL SOCIAL
8.00pm Green Man, 8.30pm Chequers 9.00pm Polecat 9.30pm Red Lion.

March

Wednesday 4th BRANCH AGM
7.30pm King's Head, Aylesbury
All local **CAMRA** members should attend to have their say!

Thursday 12th NORTHERN SOCIAL
8.00pm. Crown, Granborough, 8.45pm Pilgrim, North Marston, 9.30pm Black Boy, Oving.

Wednesday 18th MARLOW TOWN CENTRE SOCIAL
8.00pm The Coach, 8.30pm Chequers, 9.15pm Duke of Cambridge.

Saturday 21st BEER FESTIVAL SOCIAL
12 noon, Winslow Lions Beer Festival, Winslow Public Hall.

Tuesday 24th SOCIAL
8.00pm Le De Spencer Arms, Downley.

April

Monday 13th BRANCH MEETING
8.00pm Swan, Great Kimble

Further details can be found on our website
www.swansupping.org.uk

CATCH UP DURING SOCIALS:- 0792 215 8971



Buckinghamshire County Council Trading Standards
County Hall, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UP
t: 08454 040506 (Consumer Direct for advice)
t: 08453 708090 (for business advice)

Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards
PO Box 618, County Hall, Oxford, Oxon. OX1 1ND
t: 0845 0510845 f: 01865 783106
e: trading_standards@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Keep up with the latest local pub news, be given beer festival information plus the latest social details, please join our e-mailing list by going to:-

www.swansupping.org.uk/joinin

Swan Supping

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01/15

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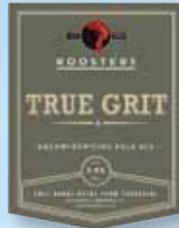
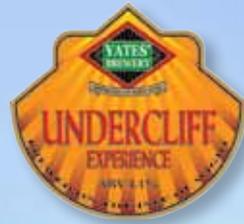
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