

FREE

Swan Supping

Issue 107

Apr/May 2015



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**New owners of
a dream pub!
See page 4**

Newsletter of the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch of CAMRA

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Circulation 6000

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NEWS FROM THE EDITOR



Following our branch AGM in early March, we now have a new branch chairman. He is Carl Griffin whose sterling work as Pubs Officer on the committee made him the logical choice to take over from Alexander Wright who has stepped down from the position in order to apply for a position on **CAMRA's** National Executive. We wish both of them good luck in their new ventures.

In our last issue we asked you to vote on the pub which would become our **Pub of the Year**.

The winner of the vote is the **Royal Standard** at Wooburn Common (pictured below) which succeeded against some stiff opposition from the **King's Head** and the **Old Millwrights Arms** from Aylesbury, the **Three Horseshoes**, Burroughs Grove, **Le De Spencer Arms**, Downley and the **Wheel**, Naphill.



A presentation will take place on Monday 30th of March and a report will appear in our next issue.

The **Royal British Legion** in Marlow is once again our **Club of the Year** and for the first time we have selected a **Cider Pub of the Year** which is the **Cross Keys** in Thame. Presentations will take place soon - please check the website for dates.

In April **CAMRA** are holding their annual Members Weekend in Nottingham. Having missed the last couple of these events, I'll be there this year hoping to try as many of the pubs in the city as I can and anyone who came on our trip to Nottingham a few years ago will be able to testify to the high standard of them.

All **CAMRA** members should make the effort to come along as it is a great opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones as well as discussing matters close to most beer drinkers' hearts.

This year is especially meaningful to me as I'll be in striking distance of my home town of Worksop. I'll be heading there on the Friday morning (17th) using the Robin Hood train line, aiming to get to Worksop station around noon. If anyone wants to join me, I'll be visiting two brewery taps, one of the best pubs on a station in the country (where I'll be making a small presentation) plus others, either ones which serve excellent ale or ones which are now closed but still hold a lot of memories for me. So if you want to know a bit more about what makes me tick, please come and join me on my mini pilgrimage. Afterwards people can return to Nottingham if they are booked on one of the many brewery trips or detour with me to try the delights of Mansfield. Then you can make your way to the main meeting and vote for Alex in the election for the N.E.

As usual, my thanks go to all the people who have contributed to **Swan Supping** without whom it would not exist. Many thanks also to all our advertisers and to Colin Stanford for the cartoon.

Cheers and have a happy Easter! **David W. Roe - Swan Supping Editor**



NATIONAL CAMRA NEWS

CAMRA lead celebrations for three huge campaign wins on Community Pubs Day (23rd March), a new national celebration day to highlight and promote the 600 pubs that have so far been listed as Assets of Community Value.

The celebration day marks new laws to protect pubs listed as Assets of Community Value (ACVs) in England coming into effect on 6th April, and neatly coincides with the beer tax cut in the recent budget and the passing into law of the Small Business Bill this week, which will give pub company licensees in England and Wales a fairer deal on beer prices and rent. **CAMRA** members were urged to visit their local Asset of Community Value pub on the day to mark this occasion.

'Thanks to the efforts of the thousands of **CAMRA** members who lobbied their local MP, from 6th April when a pub is listed as an ACV in England it will receive full planning protection, ultimately giving communities a say in what happens if the owner wishes to demolish the pub or convert it to another use. This is a powerful step towards protecting our valued community pubs. All it takes is a local group or 21 locals to start the process of having a pub listed as an ACV, so let's push the number of listed pubs from

hundreds to thousands.' Tim Page, **CAMRA** Chief Executive.

But the celebrations didn't end there, with pub company reform headed for Royal Assent after ten years of campaigning by **CAMRA** and business and tenant groups. Their work to secure a fair deal for pub tenants and consumers secured the support of over 45,000 campaigners and 212 MPs, resulting in a major Government defeat on the Small Business Bill last year. The new law will give tenants tied to the large pub companies the opportunity to opt for a rent-only deal, allowing them to buy their supplies of drinks on the open market at competitive prices.

'**CAMRA** has been campaigning for pub company reform for over ten years. We are delighted to finally see our campaign come to fruition with changes to the tied system that will be welcomed by thousands of struggling licensees across the country. The Small Business Bill will give them a much fairer deal. This is great news for tenants and great news for pubgoers who will benefit from wider beer choice, fairer prices and a thriving pub sector.' Tim added.

CAMRA members have also been raising their glasses to celebrate a historic third cut in beer tax following the Chancellor's Budget, which will

keep beer prices affordable for pubgoers across the country.

'It has been an excellent year for **CAMRA** with three major campaign wins coming to fruition within a few short weeks. None of these would have been possible without our dedicated 170,000 members who work tirelessly to protect the rights of beer drinkers and pubgoers across the country. I would like to say a huge thank-you to them for every letter written, petition signed or pub listed, which has played a huge role in **CAMRA** achieving real change. It is now up to all of us to continue this good work.' Tim Page, **CAMRA** Chief Executive.

For more guidance on how to list your pub, please visit: <http://www.camra.org.uk/list-your-local>



TAKING OVER YOUR DREAM PUB!



The hamlet of Walton, despite having been engulfed by Aylesbury, still maintains its own identity. It is well blessed with four pubs, the **Aristocrat**, **Broad Leys**, **Old Millwrights Arms** and the **Bricklayers Arms** (which features on our front cover).

The 'Brickies', parts of which date back to the 15th century, used to be an **ABC Brewery** house before it was bought by Ben Daviu who owned it for 24 years (to the day). Ben moved over to Majorca in Spain and the pub was run for the last few months by his daughters Olivia and Hannah.

The pub has now been bought by Desmond Power and Michelle Mountney. The **Bricklayers** was the only pub they were interested in as they have used it frequently over the years and could not imagine going into the very demanding pub trade anywhere else! They nearly missed out on their 'dream pub' as another offer was on the table but, luckily this fell through and their dream could continue.

They took over on the 26th of November last year after the pub had been closed for a few days, and reopened a mere two days later at 4pm. The opening was done whilst equipment, promised for earlier in the day, was still arriving!

Although Michelle has some experience behind the bar, the opening also coincided with the first time that Desmond ever pulled a pint as he has come to the pub trade after thirty-five years of truck driving. However, a quick look at the **CAMRA National Pub of the Year** featured on page 8, the **Salutation Inn** at Ham, shows that experience is not the main factor when running a pub, it is looking after your customers and ensuring that the products you serve (especially the beer!) are up to the mark.

Since moving in, Desmond and Michelle have found that running an old public house means that they are forever finding things that need repairing and replacing, so the long hours that go along with running a pub are even longer for them!

The smokers' hut in the surprisingly large garden has been removed and a lot of work out there still needs to be done but they are hoping to take advantage of the area in the wonderful summer that we are all expecting (well, one dream has come true, why can't we hope for another).

To start off with they intend to offer three beers, two from **Fullers** (*London Pride* and *ESB*) with a guest beer (**Hook Norton Lion** when visited). The number of beers and which ones are on offer will depend on the level of trade and the choices of the customers.

Food will be available from 12-3 at lunchtimes and from 5-7 in the evening. This will be pub favourites although more extensive meals will be available for functions booked into their large function room (a rarity in Aylesbury).

There is a car park at the back of the pub, accessible using William Harding Close. WiFi is available along with traditional pub games and a nice fire. Opening hours are 12-11 Monday to Thursday, 12-1 Friday and Saturday and 12-10.30 on Sunday.

David Roe/Photos: Alexander Wright

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 attractive garden with a patio, prettily planted arbour and a safe children's play area. Inside has low ceilings, rustic beams and an open fire. 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.



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DEATH OF A NATIONAL TREASURE

In the June/July issue of *Swan Supping* last year, we covered the 100th birthday party for a remarkable lady, described by her colleagues as a 'National Treasure'.

Sadly, on the 24th of February, the world's oldest barmaid, Dolly Saville, passed away after having served pints at the **Red Lion** in Wendover for 74 years! We were all greatly saddened by this news and our thoughts go out to all four generations of Dolly's family, her many friends and the customers who regularly frequent the bar named after her.

Dolly had lived in Wendover since she was three and when she started behind the bar in 1940 beer was a mere eight pence a pint. She saw many changes in the world in her lifetime but was a constant for the people in the town that she loved so much.

Our thanks to Tim Cooper, Managing Director of *Dayla*, for his kind words to finish the article:

Dolly Saville who sadly passed away recently at the grand age of 100 was part of the very fabric of Wendover. We all simply adored her and she came to play a part in so many lives locally. In 1948 my late parents were married and at their Wedding Reception at the **Red Lion Hotel** Dolly was a waitress. 50 years later on their Golden Anniversary I made sure that she once again was on duty to help us celebrate.

She spanned so many generations and mixed with them all, even regularly going out to dinner with my daughter Kaz and friends who were only a mere 70 years younger. But then Dolly was ageless. The most memorable description of Dolly came on one of her many Birthday Parties when John Junkin, the great actor and comedy writer said: 'Folklore has it that one day Dolly was seen walking down Wendover High Street and a distinguished Gentleman stopped her in her tracks and decided to build a hotel around her!!'

The rest as they say is history. Sadly missed but never forgotten and always in our hearts.

David Roe & Tim Cooper



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LOCAL NEWS

ASHENDON

The **Hundred** is adopting **Vale's** reinvented **IPA**, which is proving extremely popular, as their house beer, **Vale** being their closest brewery at just under three miles away across the fields. Offerings from **Tring** or **Chiltern** are also regularly on offer.

AYLESBURY

The **Hop Pole** is holding an Easter beer festival from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th of April.

BOLTER END

The **Peacock** is closed and boarded up and its future is unknown.

CRYERS HILL

The **White Lion** is due to reopen after a short closure for a refurbishment. Mr and Mrs Garrett and their son are at the helm. The couple had the pub many years ago so it's like coming home for them.

EMMINGTON

The **Inn at Emmington** devoured a pin of **XT 10** in a matter of hours having been weened on **Chiltern Black**, Jerry & Paula's longest ever running guest ale. **XT 15** is on next with **Fullers London Pride** and **Rebellion IPA** constant attendees. The recently extended lunchtime menu makes this an ideal venue for a trip out.

GREAT KIMBLE

Wycombe council's planning website still shows the **Bernard Arms** planning application as 'pending consideration'.

The **Swan** will hold a beer festival on Easter Saturday (4th April) coinciding with the annual Kimble point-to-point race meeting held in the village. A beer tent, featuring real ales from local breweries, such as **Animal** and **Tring**, is planned along with a barbecue plus live music in the evening. Depending on the weather, Kimble races can be a hugely popular event, depending on the weather, so get there early before the crowds drink it dry.

The **Swan** will also be holding an art exhibition the weekend after Easter (9th-12th April) with work by local artists exhibited in the pub and in a marquee. The following day (13th) the pub hosts our April branch meeting - an appropriate venue for **CAMRA's**



Community Pubs month.

HADDENHAM

Reserve the date for your favourite Summer Beer Festival on Saturday 4th July.

The **Rising Sun** is holding a **Vale** week during the first week of April to celebrate **Vale's** significant Anniversary.

HIGH WYCOMBE

The **Hour Glass** in Sands regularly has three ales available and had **Caledonian Flying Scotsman**, **Bitter Winter** and **Over the Bar** available when visited recently.

LACEY GREEN

The **Whip** is holding a beer festival over the weekend of 15th and 16th of May.

LONG CRENDON

The good people of Long Crendon have purchased their phone box on the Square in the village. For just one day on 21st March the box became Britain's smallest pub - local company: **XT Brewery** donated the beers which were supped by the members of the Long Crendon Preservation Society who had worked hard on the annual village litter picking.

The mini pub (pictured above) rang up as a great success and a local talking point - the village hopes to call upon their bar again soon for other local events.

The **Eight Bells** has **XT Bells** (3.8%) and **Ringwood Bitter** supported by two further hand pumps. **XT 15** is proving to be a firm favourite and may be available most of the year with something else like **Hobgoblin Gold**.

LUDDERSHALL

The **Bull and Butcher** serves **Hook Norton Hooky** and **Black Sheep Bitter** to wash down their renowned home cooking.

MARLOW

Popular dining venue the **Britannia** (GBG 2015) continues to offer four **McMullen** ales throughout the year. Brewery core beers **AK** (3.7%), **County** (4.3%) and **IPA** (4.8%) are supplemented with their monthly specials range. **Bootwarmer** (5.2%), **Stout Herts** (5.0%) and **Super Cooper** (4.0%) have all been on in the last few months.

As we went to press, High Street public house the **Chequers** has closed for refurbishment with scaffolding obscuring the pubs façade. It is scheduled for reopening on 30th March so we look forward to reporting further news in our next issue.

On our recent town centre pub social beers at the **Coach** were noted as **Young's Bitter** (£4.50/pint) **Rebellion IPA** and **Wells Bombardier** (both £5.00/pint).

Back-street local the **Duke of Cambridge** has served **Chilli Plum Porter** (6.1%) from the **Waen** brewery and **IPA** from **Malt the Brewery** with other guest ales coming on imminently. **Charles Wells** core beers **Eagle IPA** (3.6%) and **Bombardier** (4.1%) have replaced **Rebellion** beers at their handpumps.

Greene King flagship pub the **Marlow Donkey** have had some interesting guest ales on of late alongside their **GK** range of beers. **Cotleigh Tawny Owl**

(3.8%) and **Wolf Sirius Dog Star** (4.4%) were a couple of ales that have been seen on handpump. The **'Donkey'** will be joining forces with the **Marlow RBL Club** (directly opposite the **Donkey**) for a Springfest beer festival from May 1st to 4th with 40 real ales on throughout the early May Bank Holiday weekend.

Ever-changing ales such as **Windsor & Eton Zinzan's Drop** (4.0%), **Brampton Ernie** (4.0%), **Gun Dog Chilly Dog** (4.0%), **Humpty Dumpty Broadland Sunrise** (4.2%) and **XT 10** (4.5%) have recently been imbibed alongside ales from the **Marston's** and **Rebellion** portfolio, at the **Royal British Legion**. This **AV&W CAMRA Regional Club of the Year 2014**, will be hosting mild for the 31 days of May (starting at their Springfest beer festival) to celebrate **CAMRA's Make May a Mild Month**. Dark mild from various breweries will be showcased at 'Club Legion' which welcomes all **CAMRA** members.

MEDMENHAM

The **Dog and Badger** has been closed since last year. The sign outside proclaims 'Closed for refurbishment - reopening Spring 2015' - so hopefully some more information in our next issue.

NAPHILL

The **Wheel** is holding a beer festival over the weekend of 17th and 18th of April.

NORTH MARSTON

The **Pilgrim** has been transformed with over 100 villagers 'sorting' the splendid raised back garden. The **Hedge Layer** cider on handpump is superb, as is the recent real hedge-laying alongside the village cemetery. **XT 4** and a Cornish beer are served here.

OAKLEY

At the **Chandos Arms**, Piers has signed a tenancy agreement with **Punch Taverns** taking effect from 28th April. He will be adding a third handpump which will allow him to experiment with some different and potentially local ales. **Sharp's Doom Bar** and **Fullers London Pride** are, however, firm favourites here.

PRINCES RISBOROUGH

A recent visit to the **Bell** found **Charles Wells Youngs Special** (4.5%) and **Shepherd Neame Spitfire** (4.5%) at their handpumps, a locals' pub that has served many guest ales over the years.

High Street inn the **George & Dragon**



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only offered *Doom Bar* (4.0%) with the other handpump redundant. Hopefully this vacancy will become employed in the future.

Greene King public house the **Whiteleaf Cross** hosts three of their brewery owned brews and a guest ale. Recently *Intrepid IPA* (6.0%) and *Wild Swan* (3.5%) from Derbyshire brewery **Thornbridge** were experienced one evening in February.

STEWKLEY

New landlord Graham Kelman took over the **Enterprise** owned **Swan** on 17th of March following the departure of holding managers Alan and Wendy Hardiman. Graham has been in the trade for many years and has run pubs such as the **Top Bell** and the **Office** in nearby Leighton Buzzard – the latter for fifteen years.

His intention is to keep it as a village local and encourage all walks of life in the community to enjoy the benefits of the facility on their doorstep. He is currently ably assisted by his sister Rebecca, niece Georgia and son Sam behind the bar as well as cellarman Keith Driscoll, who has looked after the ale in many pubs in the Aylesbury area, and new chef Darren, who has 29 years experience.

Four ales will always be served, current regulars *Courage Best* and *Sharps Doom Bar*, with two changing guests – at least one of which will be local.

Food will be served seven days a week from 24th March with a separate Sunday menu. Summer opening hours will be from 12 noon to midnight and a loyalty



card has already been launched.

A beer and cider event with pig roast and live music is planned for the bank holiday on the 4th of May. For details email info@theswanstewkley.com or phone 01525 240285.

TIDDINGTON

There are big changes at the **Fox & Goat** where the **Oak Taverns** manager has been replaced by Doug Sheard, a contact of the former owners from Great Hasely. The pub is now a truly independent Free House. Ales are sourced through *XT* and a splendid range is assured with *Sharp's Doom Bar* for the less adventurous. When visited recently *Potbelly Brewery Hop Trotter* and *XT 4* were on for the more discerning. A stock of bottled *XT* beers is available.

WORMINGHALL

The **Clifden Arms** is reopening in early April with former caterer Chris Morris at the helm of this **Enterprise** establishment that has been closed for a while. His ale policy had not been ascertained at the time of going to press, but we wish him well with the extensive renovation programme - see photo above.

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NATIONAL PUB AND CLUB OF THE YEAR



The **CAMRA National Pub of the Year** award has this year gone to the **Salutation Inn**, Ham, Gloucestershire.

It is a rural freehouse in a small village and what makes this award even more impressive is that this is the first pub the landlord has ever run!

Former business analyst Peter Tiley had never even pulled a pint when he decided to quit his job in London and follow his love of beer to take over the pub with his wife Claire (both are featured in the photograph above). Eleven months later the pub had won its local branch competition, then the whole region, finally making it through to the final four and today, being named overall **National Pub of the Year**.

Peter said 'For the **Sally** to have won **National Pub of the Year** is beyond our wildest dreams - we're totally shell-shocked. Pubs are so important to me that to have our own one recognised in this way is just amazing. We count ourselves so unbelievably lucky to have a brilliant team of staff who are so passionate and dedicated as well as a community of locals who have given so much to support and contribute towards the pub. It is these people that have made the pub what it is today and for that we are incredibly grateful.'

Pubs are judged by **CAMRA** on a variety of criteria such as atmosphere, level of service, value for money and community focus, with extra weighting of course given to the quality of their real ale, cider and perry. The **Salutation Inn**, known by locals as 'the **Sally**', was popular with judges due to its fantastic beer selection and welcoming, homely feel – with one judge saying 'what struck me most was the welcome – as if I was being invited into a private house as a friend'.

CAMRA Director Abigail Newton says that being named the overall **Pub of the Year** is a massive achievement for any landlord. 'What Peter and Claire have done in the short time they have been running the pub is nothing short of staggering and goes to show that passion, enthusiasm, and a real love of beer are hugely important when running a pub. They have hit the

ground running and taken what was already a great pub and made it truly exceptional – beating off over 50,000 other landlords from across the UK.'

For those thinking of visiting the pub, it is described in **CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2015** as a 'rural gem in the Severn Valley, within walking distance of the Jenner Museum, Berkeley Castle and Deer Park. The enthusiastic landlord keeps an inspired selection of ales and eight real ciders and perries. The pub has two cosy bars with a log fire and a skittles alley. Live folk music and piano singalongs regularly occur. Shove-ha'penny and table skittles are played.'

The three other finalists were, in alphabetical order, the **Freshfield** in Formby (Merseyside), the **Harewood Arms** in Broadbottom (Greater Manchester) and the **Windmill** in Sevenoaks Weald (Kent).

The winner of the **National Club of the Year Competition** is **Wortley Men's Club**, Reading Room Lane, Wortley, Sheffield S35 7DB in South Yorkshire, which beat off competition from over 28,000 clubs nationwide.

Wortley Men's Club (pictured below with a lot of happy customers) is described in the latest **Good Beer Guide** as being 'In the heart of this pretty village, surrounded by open countryside, the outside of the building is impressive, with traditional timber framing and a small beer garden. The opulent interior has ornate ceilings, a small bar area, a plush lounge and a large games room. The guest ale comes from a local brewery and a guest draught cider is always kept.'

Nigel Pickering, the steward at the club had this to say on being named the best club for real ale anywhere in the UK,

'We are overjoyed at receiving this award, it is beyond our expectations. We introduced cask beer in 1997 with one pump and we now have four pumps and one real cider available. This year we will be holding our third annual Beer Festival, which will offer 40 beers and 10 ciders. We try to be active in the local community, we are part of a small village and hold events in conjunction with the local businesses and church, most recently a Brass Band Competition and we have also raised money for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance through our Beer Festival.'

Club Mirror magazine and **CAMRA** joined forces three years ago in the quest to find the best real ale clubs – those which offer a fantastic atmosphere, welcoming surroundings, and most importantly, top quality real ale served in great condition. Competition organiser John Holland had this to say, '**Wortley Men's Club** is hugely deserving of this prestigious **CAMRA** award. Not only is it a beautiful period building, but the Steward's commitment to quality real ale and the welcome you receive really is second to none. The club itself of course serves men and women, and free to visit for **CAMRA** members, but I think you would think yourself extremely lucky to have this as your local club, and I can see why it remains as popular as ever with members as well proving a hit with competition judges.'

The other finalists were **Cheltenham Motor Club**, **Appleton Thorn Village Hall**, Cheshire and **Poole Ex-Servicemans (RBL) Club**.

CAMRA's eligibility criteria for **Club of the Year** is that the club must allow admittance to **CAMRA** members, both male and female, and serve great quality real ale, cider or perry.



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Car Parking and tickets on the day at Page's Park Station, Billington Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 4TN - D1 bus from Leighton Buzzard mainline Station every 45 mins.

THE MARLOW DONKEY & MARLOW ROYAL BRITISH LEGION PRESENT SPRINGFEST 2015

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A BEER FESTIVAL WITH FOOTBALL!



Sometimes being the editor of *Swan Supping* has its perks as I was kindly invited, along with a guest, to Wycombe Wanderers to watch the Chairboys play one of their main rivals for promotion, Shrewsbury Town.

The reason for the invitation from Matt Cecil was to advertise their mini beer festivals (above left) which they hold for various matches in the season.

So Derek Plater, longtime *CAMRA* member and football fan, and myself went along to Adams Park where we were introduced to Chris Hubbard who kindly showed us round the ground before the bulk of the crowd arrived.

All the bars offer real ale except the marquee for the away supporters, and in the hospitality suite (pictured top right) they had *Hardy & Hansons Bitter* and *Rebellion Zebedee* available to wash down the copious food on offer as they watch the match.

After returning to the festival, Derek and I tried some of the various beers available, all from the *Greene King* stable. The range included not only the standard *IPA* and *Old Speckled Hen* as they had *Maulden's Bronze Adder*, *Hardy & Hansons Bitter* and *Olde Trip* along with *Belhaven Grand Slam* and the excellent *Greene King IPA Reserve*.

This was their fifteenth festival and it was very popular and would have been enjoyed by rugby fans if Wasps hadn't decided to buzz off to Coventry. Bet they don't do as well there at their new ground!

We took up our seats in time for the kick-off, which turned out to be a very wise decision as Wycombe midfielder, Sam Wood, scored the only goal of the game with a header after 39 seconds. I have been watching football for nearly fifty years and this must be the fastest goal I have ever seen! The rest of the game was quite tense but the importance of the result as both teams aim for promotion seemed to weigh heavily on both teams. The Chairboys fans in the standing section to the right of us, however, cheered on their team for the full ninety minutes and made for a great atmosphere.

After the game we headed back to the festival to enjoy more beer and say our thanks. A really enjoyable day out.

David Roe/Photos: Derek Plater

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SIGNIFICANT MICROBIRTHDAY

We are blessed with some wonderful breweries in the Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe branch but, as they're scattered in places like Brill, Terrick, Prestwood, deepest Long Crendon and Marlow Bottom (ooh, err missus) you'd be hard pressed to organise a pub crawl that included more than one of them, especially on a Sunday.

Not so London, where in certain parts of the East End and its environs, there are more microbreweries around than you can shake a hipster's craft beer bottle at.

So for my 'significant birthday' celebration on a bright, cold Sunday at the start of February, we set out to the micro-capital of the country in Hackney, Hoxton, Old Street and Islington.

We started early – dangerously so. Carl, Simon, Eddie, Tony and I arrived at the **London Fields Brewery** Tap at eleven on a Sunday morning. Listed as being open at this ungodly hour by no less than the **Good Beer Guide**, information backed up by the brewery's website and a phone call the previous day, we were looking forward to a pre-midday whistle wetting.

Unfortunately the brewery tap was shuttered and looked like it would resolutely remain so for some time. Neither were they answering their phone as we forlornly stood outside, dialling.

London Fields Brewery has a colourful history which seems to be almost as exotic as some of the goings on in our own fictional **Gravediggers'** microbrewery. It's been widely reported that the brewery's founder, Jules de Vere Whiteway-Wilkinson, set up the business after being released from prison, halfway through serving a sentence for supplying cocaine to City bankers.

The brewery, and especially its tap, has appeared to have been a redemptive success story with profits from the business reportedly generating cash to pay off the owner's debt to the government. Hollywood actors apparently partied away there last New Years' Eve, according to the Daily Telegraph – an option that wasn't open to us that Sunday – and we only wanted a beer.

Since our abortive visit, there have been reports in the press that the business has ceased brewing, outsourcing its beers to contract brewers elsewhere in the country, although keeping the brewery tap open. While we were rather disappointed to forgo our morning pints at least we weren't mourning for our jobs as some of the brewery's staff may recently have been doing.

This news puts our inconvenience into some perspective and is a reminder of the unpredictable nature of the microbrewery business.

Stranded, beerless in London Fields, we turned to new technology – **CAMRA's What Pub** app. This located a **Wetherspoons** house, **Baxter's**



Court, half a mile up the road in Hackney. Whatever **CAMRA** members say about **Wetherspoons** (and some say a lot) **JDW** can be relied upon to serve a welcome pint at half-eleven on a Sunday morning.

In fact the beer was so good in the **Baxter's Court** we stayed for a second pint and over this we realised that, slightly up the High Street, was another microbrewery – **Howling Hops**, based at Britain's most beard-friendly pub, the **Cock Tavern**.

Swan Supping readers with sharp memories may have remembered that we visited this pub last summer on a crawl starting from the Olympic Park, visiting yet more microbreweries in the Hackney and Olympic Park areas.

We arrived at the **Cock Inn** on the stroke of its advertised midday opening time - but the door remained locked with not much going on inside. Surely lightning wasn't going to strike two micros in the same day?

After spotting a barman inside and looking suitably desperate for a drink, pity was taken and we were given a rather unique working welcome. Apparently the pub's cleaner hadn't turned up to tidy up the mess from a lively Saturday night and a deal was struck, whereby if we set out the bar stools and did a bit of clearing up – Eddie was a wizard with the brush – then we'd not only get served, but be given a tour of the brewery downstairs.

The brewery lives up to its micro-billing, being crammed in the cellar under the bar. This allows house beers to be drawn straight from the conditioning tanks into the handpumps. We enjoyed a varied selection of **Howling Hops** brews plus some of the many others from other micros that were available.





This isn't a place with *Wetherspoons* type prices, however, the 25 01 White IPA was a staggering £6.30, although after a few you'd also be staggering at 6.8% ABV.

So in this part of London, micros are so thick on the ground that if one turns out to be unexpectedly shut then you can get out of jail by walking up the road and getting a tour of another.

After that impromptu reorganisation – and joined by Dave Roe – we hopped on a bus to Hoxton for the rest of the crawl. Slightly delayed by our unexpected pub cleaning assignment, we arrived at the **Howl at the Moon** on Hoxton Street – one of the growing number of local Victorian boozers that's been happily reinvented as a trendy outlet for the local hipsters to enjoy the increasing range of interesting local beers. And they give a 10% discount, much appreciated by Noj, who'd been patiently nursing a *Redemption Trinity*.

We continued into Hoxton Square – spiritual home of the Shoreditch hipster – and the **Electricity Showroom**, a huge and opulently decorated bar that was, indeed, originally built by Shoreditch Council as a showroom for the uses of electricity – to bring the benefits of electrical power to the local residents when they were some of London's poorest, rather than the trendiest as they are now. Even the signage over the bar's entrance is original.

From then it was to the real ale nirvana of the **Old Fountain** off Old Street, where we were joined by Elvis, and where the likes of *Hawkshead Dry Stone Stout* were available for our delectation. A splinter group then took in the nearby **Eagle** on City Road. This pub is immortalised in the nursery rhyme Pop Goes the Weasel:

*Up and down the City Road
In and out the Eagle
That's the way the money goes
Pop! goes the weasel.*

Fortunately there was enough money left to go to the next pub, the famous



Wenlock Arms. As mentioned in previous *Swan Suppings*, the **Wenlock** has been long been a *CAMRA* favourite – a basic, back-street boozer in an unglamorous location. However, the **Wenlock's** locality is undergoing a dramatic transformation with several huge, upmarket apartment blocks being constructed nearby, around the City Road Basin on the Regent's Canal.

The **Wenlock** had been closed and threatened with development into flats itself but, in a landmark example, has been rescued and sympathetically refurbished. There's now a huge selection of real ales available from the likes of *Dark Star*, *Hogsback*, *Oakham* and many other excellent breweries as can be seen from the set of handpumps pictured above.

From the **Wenlock** we made our wobbly way along the canal, stopping off at the very busy **Narrowboat**, which is actually on the towpath and arriving at yet another brewpub, the **Earl of Essex** on Danbury Road in Islington. Despite being late Sunday afternoon, the place was heaving and it was standing room only.

Similarly busy was the always excellent **Charles Lamb** on the other side of the canal, which was my penultimate stop before the last brewpub. This was the **Brewhouse and Kitchen**, a recently opened branch of a small chain of microbreweries that originated in Hampshire and Dorset. It's tucked round the back of Angel station and, when we arrived around 6pm on a Sunday, was doing a roaring trade.

The beers on our visit were named after local Islington notables, including *Hitchcock*, *Chaplin* and *Spandau B*. Unfortunately, I'd reached significantly more than my own micro-saturation point.

When I was paying more attention to the curious cut-off beer bottle light fittings than to my couple of halves I realised it was time to return home where the breweries are slightly more than staggering distance apart.

Mike Clarke



BEER IN BEIJING AND BOGOTA

Brenda and I have been fans of real beer for over 40 years. In the early 70's I was not an enthusiastic beer drinker having quaffed (too?) many pints of cider at University and then switching to lager type beer while living in West Africa. I then met Brenda and was introduced to *Tolly Cobbold Cantab* (sadly no longer brewed) dispensed by gravity from wooden barrels stacked behind the bar of the **Cabinet** at Reed near Royston.

We signed up to **CAMRA** in its first year and apart from a couple of years have been full members ever since. The **GBG** soon became our bible which introduced us to more and more pubs selling good quality beers.

With the explosion of small breweries in this country we try to taste as many as possible. Frequently we choose an area for a short break based on

- α) The number of local breweries
- β) The availability of a dog friendly pub(s) with accommodation and close by footpaths for early morning walks.
- χ) Good general walking.

For our major vacations we have a list of places we would like to visit around the world. Although the major aim of these visits is tourism, taking in the cultural high points and the wild life, we do not forget our love of beer and given the opportunity we will seek out any local breweries. The internet has made this activity a lot easier.

This year we were in Beijing with most of a day to ourselves before meeting up with the rest of the tour group. We had done a Google search and to our surprise and delight unearthed two micro breweries. Having downloaded addresses and maps, we realised the breweries were north of the centre of Beijing and we were staying in the south. Luckily Beijing has a good subway



A Yard of Ale (Bogota style)

system with circle line which would take us from south to north and back again. Circle lines are great as they bring you back to your starting point – eventually. To our surprise the subway was easy to use with announcements in both Mandarin and English. We went to the top of the circle line and then walked south through some very attractive parks to build up a thirst. Our guide book pointed out some cultural high points along the way.

The two breweries we had found were both in an old part of the city with narrow alleys (hutongs) with small houses and shops. The addresses and directions from the internet were accurate but a good quality map certainly would help. Both the breweries are run by expatriate citizens of the USA.

The first one we visited was the **Great Leap Brewing Company**, Original No 6, 6 Doujiao Hutong. This place does not have a sign outside to proclaim its existence but just the number 6 on a wooden door which we initially walked straight past. The wooden door opens into a courtyard area with tables and chairs. The day we were there they were organising a pub crawl of local bars that served their beers so there were a number of people milling around – nearly all ex-pat. We declined an offer to join in. We sat in the courtyard as it was a very hot day but there is plenty of room to sit inside.

As with many of the US breweries all the beers are pasteurised and with strengths of 5% or above. We prefer our beers to be sub 4.0% but needs must when the devil drives and we had a very nice pint of *Pale Ale No 6* at 5.5%. It was a very acceptable pint especially after drinking some of the local canned beer. I am not going to list all their beers here but the description of *Honey Ma Gold* 6.3% makes interesting reading.

We knew that we still had to negotiate the subway and therefore moved on after one pint to the **Slowboat Brewery Taproom** Dongcheng Qu, Dongsiba tiao 56 hao. This was easier to find with a large notice on the door. The brewery has a number of outlets but this was close and gave the best choice of beers. There was a very wide range of beers to choose from with several around the 4.5%. Unfortunately we cannot remember the names of the beers we tasted but we had a couple of pints each and they were all very acceptable – full of flavour.

We had a long chat with one of the co-owners of this brewery and he admitted that their market was mainly the expatriate community and western tourists. He added that Chinese do not have the 'I am going to the pub for a beer' culture of the Brits or the Americans but he lives in hope that they will change.

After three pints each we decided that we should be sensible and return to the hotel and make do with canned local brews for the rest of the vacation. We did check but could find no breweries in the places we visited outside Beijing.

Unfortunately life is not one long holiday and work took me once again to Bogota for a couple of weeks in February and June. I do not mind this as I like the Colombians who are intelligent, hard-working and love to party. I first worked there in the late 90s but I did not discover the **Bogota Beer Company (BBC)** until I was there in around 2004. The story I heard about how this company was formed follows. As with many Colombians the two brothers who set up the **BBC** were educated in the US. When they returned to Bogota they found the beer bland compared with the *Sam Adams* they had been drinking in the US. The story goes that their father packed them off back to the US to learn how to brew. They returned with the relevant knowledge and the **BBC** was born.

As with the Beijing breweries the beers are all 5% or stronger. I normally drink either the light *Classica* or the slightly darker *Roja*. Both are very pleasant and well worth the 15 minute walk from my hotel to their nearest bar – one has to have some exercise after being cooped up in an office for 10 hours. The other advantage of visiting their bar is they sometimes have rugby on!

Geof Collins



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ELECTION 2015 - VOTE FOR PUBS

With the current rate of pub closures impacting on the social fabric of British life it has become even more important in this election that our current and potential representatives in both parliament and at local council level understand what pressures are causing these closures. I have in recent weeks contacted all of our sitting MPs and election candidates to explain these pressures and to ask for their support of **CAMRA's** aims. The constituencies that our branch area either totally or partially covers are Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham and Henley.



All candidates were informed that excessive beer duty, despite the cancellation of the beer duty escalator and the 3p cut over the last few years, is still crippling for pubs and effectively gives preferential treatment to other leisure industries which aren't used as 'cash cows' by the government. The UK pays 40% of the total EU beer tax despite only consuming less than 13% of the total beer in the EU. No other country in the EU pays the same high levels of duty on a beer. It would be totally unthinkable for Germany, Belgium or the Czech Republic to tax their national drink to such extremes. The UK drinker pays duty of 43.6p per pint on an average 4.2% beer and quite ironically this tax is taxed further as VAT of 20% is added to the price at the till, effectively raising the tax paid to 52.32p per pint. This led to my first questions to candidates:

Do you support further reductions in beer duty?

There is an interesting campaign lead by a Frenchman called Jacques Borel who has been lobbying our government to reduce VAT in the hospitality sector, currently 20%, to create parity with the rate that supermarkets pay (0-5%). The disparity considerably disadvantages the hospitality sector and encourages people to drink at home instead of socially. His campaign has led to **Wetherspoons**, **Fullers** and other pub chains to reduce VAT on one day a year to highlight the issue. Jacques Borel has been successful in getting VAT reduced in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and Ireland. France currently charges only 5.5% VAT and Ireland only 9% within the hospitality sector. This has been found to boost employment (particularly for youths who are most impacted by the recession), increase social activities and reduce social security payments for the respective governments. However, despite five years of campaigning there has been no inclination from government that they intend to reduce VAT in the hospitality sector. To cover this point I asked a further question;

Do you support the campaign by Jacques Borel to reduce VAT in the hospitality industry and give pubs a level playing field against supermarket competition?

Another serious threat to pubs is the permitted development rights which allow pubs to be converted to religious establishments (**Greyhound** in Aylesbury, **Iron Duke** in Wycombe), supermarkets (**Downley Donkey**, **Turnpike** in Booker) or other retail / office premises (**Terriers** in Wycombe, **Swan & Castle** in Quainton) without the community having an opportunity to object as planning permission is not required. It is even more beguiling that once a pub has been converted, planning permission is required to change it back into a pub. Recently, pressure from **CAMRA** resulted in the government removing permitted development rights for pubs that are listed as assets of community value but a vote to give the public a say on what happens to their pubs was narrowly defeated. Unfortunately, all our MPs voted against the public having a say in what happens to their pub. This led to me asking the following;

Will you fight to scrap permitted development rights for pubs?

Will you fight to give greater protection for pubs?

Despite 23 candidates being contacted, only five candidates bothered to respond. This may indicate the calibre of candidates that are on offer within our area and would explain why a lot of people are disillusioned by politics. It is a shame when candidates do not respond to their public who they are supposed to represent. This could explain why voter turnout is so low. Obviously, this criticism is not levelled at those who responded.

Respondents

Steven Lambert (Liberal Democrats, Aylesbury) – He confirmed that he has signed **CAMRA's** manifesto, committing to protect pubs should he be elected to represent Aylesbury.

Peter Chapman (Liberal Democrats, Beaconsfield) – He answered 'No' to each of my questions. He did comment that he would like to understand the financial model of a typical pub more so that he can comment further on **CAMRA's** campaign goals. Mr Chapman is a strong supporter of minimum pricing for alcohol which I believe may assist pubs in their rivalry against supermarkets using alcohol as a loss-leader and encourage more people to drink socially instead of at home. I forwarded Mr Chapman's response to Greg Mulholland (Liberal Democrat MP – Otley) who is a leading campaigner to save British pubs so that he may inform Mr Chapman of his parliamentary efforts.

Sue Copper (Liberal Democrats, Henley) – She is a long-time member of **CAMRA** and has signed **CAMRA's** manifesto committing herself to help protect pubs should she be elected to represent Henley. She works at the **Great British Beer Festival**, delivers copies of **SOXON Ales** (neighbouring **CAMRA** magazine) and also writes articles for the same. Sue is responsible for introducing the **CAMRA** recommended policy to the South Oxfordshire DC Local Plan, protecting community valued assets such as pubs.

David Meacock (UKIP, Wycombe) – He stated that it is UKIP policy for candidates not to respond to questionnaires whether or not candidates agree with them. However, he sent me documents of UKIP policy including their Save the Pub campaign. He also stated that UKIP are committed to amend the smoking ban to give clubs and pubs the choice to open smoking rooms which are properly ventilated and separated from non-smoking areas. Also, he stated that UKIP are opposed to minimum pricing for alcohol.

John Bercow (Speaker, Buckingham) – Mr Bercow cannot vote on any parliamentary debates as he has to remain neutral as the speaker of the House of Commons. He has always passed any literature to the relevant MP in charge of the respective policy being discussed.

Non-respondent list

Aylesbury

David Lidington (Conservative)
David Lyons (Liberal Democrats)
Will Cass (Labour)
Chris Adams (UKIP)

Beaconsfield

Dominic Grieve (Conservative)
Dave Hampton (Green)
Tim Scott (UKIP)

Buckingham

Alan Francis (Green)
Colin Dale (Monster Raving Loony)
Dave Fowler (UKIP)

Henley

John Howell (Conservative)
Mark Stevenson (Green)
Sam Juthani (Labour)
Christopher Jones (UKIP)

Wycombe

Steven Baker (Conservative)
Jem Bailey (Green)
David Williams (Labour)
Steve Guy (Liberal Democrats)

Ultimately, you have a chance to influence the future of British pubs in the upcoming election. Make sure your potential candidates know that you wish for British pubs to be given a level playing-field with other industrial, commercial and hospitality sectors. **CAMRA** has secured many successes in the last few years however this will all be in vain if the pressure is not kept up on our representatives or if anti-pub MPs are elected. I hope we will all soon be celebrating with a Great British pint in a Great British pub very soon when legislations with real teeth has been passed to support our pubs and brewing industry.

Carl Griffin, AV & W Branch Chairman

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A WALK ON THE MILD SIDE



It's coming up to May. In *CAMRA*-land, that's the signal for Mild May, the annual celebration of mild beer. The month was devised to save what was becoming an increasing rare style. But... what is this mild that we're saving anyway?

For a beer style that most people regard nowadays as a weak, dark, low-hopped beer, mild has had a surprisingly turbulent past, and for much of its history was nothing like the beer we know and (in my case, at least) love today.

The first mention of mild (albeit the Saxon word for it) dates back to the

7th century. At this time, 'mild' referred to a beer that was not aged before serving (as opposed to the stronger-flavoured 'old' or 'stale' ale that was aged in barrels for several weeks). There was no stipulation as to colour or strength – any beer could be 'served mild'. However, it's worth noting that even then 'mild' tended to be cheaper than 'stale' (unsurprisingly 'stale' has since been dropped from beer marketing campaigns...) due to the shorter production time. Mild also tended to be sweeter, as the yeast would have had less time to act on the sugars in the malted barley.

Fast forward a thousand years and hops started to arrive in Britain, and replaced herbs as the favoured preservative (and of course, flavouring and bittering agent) in beer. As mild beer was used more quickly, it tended to need less preservative hops than the stale beer – and was thus less hoppy. However, even in Victorian times mild still bore little relevance to the beer we know today; it tended to be between 5-7%, and was as likely to be pale as it was dark.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, with beer production largely

industrialised, most beers had become 'running' beers – produced for swift turnover. The old distinction between mild and aged beers had gone, and milds were increasingly known for being dark and sweet. It only remained for the shortages and rationing of the First World War to cause the strength to drop to the 3-4% that milds have been known for. With the low strength and resulting cheaper prices, it soon became known as a working man's drink, ideal for slaking the thirsts of industrial workers across the UK.

This was to prove mild's undoing.

In the first half of the twentieth century, mild accounted for over 70% of draught beer sales. However, after the Second World War drinkers started to look for more aspirational drinks than the 'working man's mild', and by the late 1960's mild had been overtaken in popularity by bitter (and unfortunately soon after that by pale yellow fizz). Mild production declined precipitously until it was pulled back from the brink of extinction by the Mild May campaign. Unfortunately, even today it remains rather a rare, speciality beer – a real shame for something that can be so tasty, and one that in an age of high-hopped beers highlights the great flavours that malt can bring to a beer.

So, what milds should you try? Locally, *Vale's Black Swan* (3.9%) is a good example of the 'modern' mild (pictured top left). It pours deep brown with a lasting beige head and a light fizz. There are blackberries up front with a touch of smoke and a smidgen of cough mixture. Chocolate and lightly roasted malt comes through in the dry, bittersweet finish. It's pretty good, although it has to be said that it's even better on cask.

Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby (6%) is perhaps the best known of a new breed of 'Victorian style' stronger milds. However, for me *William Mucklow's Dark Mild* (6%) from the *Bewdley Brewery* is even better. It's named for the last brewer to brew in Bewdley (prior to the modern day brewery) and it's brown with a thin beige head (pictured top right). There's a glorious rich chocolate and fruit aroma with a little roasty malt. On tasting it's got a velvety smooth mouthfeel with lots more chocolate, sweet raisins and cream sherry. It develops a rich malt flavour with a hint of smoke in the creamy finish. It hides the alcohol very well and goes down dangerously easily. It's a fantastic mild, one of the best I've had.

Before the joy of Mild May, however, the Easter chocfest kicks off. If you're sick of over-packaged low-grade chocolate eggs, maybe you should ask your loved ones to get you a beer this year instead.

There are some great chocolate beers on the market – *Young's Double Chocolate Stout* (5.2%) is one of the best. However, for something more local go for an Easter Bunny link with *XT's Animal Rabbit* (4.2%), a deep gold beer (pictured below) with a lasting white head. It's got a resinous mouthfeel with a light fizz that suits the beer. Up front you've got apricot and sweet grape followed by malty biscuits with light floral hints. A heavy pine bitterness sears through the finish – the hopheads will love this one! Unfortunately, as I write this I've just received an email from the brewery saying that they've run out of *Rabbit* – but that its big brother *Bastard Bunny Brew Ha Ha* (a 7.2% monster) has arrived in its place. So why not hop off to the brewery and if you twitch your nose and stamp your feet nicely you may be able to get one.

Happy Easter!

Anth Duffield



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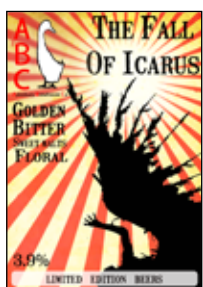

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LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

Aylesbury Brewhouse



The next Limited Edition Beer coming from the Brewhouse behind the Hop Pole is *Ceci n'est pas lager*. Rene Margritte's paintings ask questions of what is what. Today's styles of beer ask what style is what. *ABC* has come up with a deep red 4.3% malty beer, bursting with Cascade hops. This is NOT lager.



New Zealand is great for growing hops. In *NZPA* the finest Kiwi hops are used in the brewing of this 4.6% ale, whilst a handful of dry, whole-cone NZ hops placed in each cask create another level of tropical fruitiness with a lemony bitterness.



Icarus' wings made from wax and feathers melted as he flew too close to the sun and fell to his death in the sea. *The Fall of Icarus* is a golden beer, hopped with Amarillo for a great, inviting floral aroma, with a bitter finish.

'We knew the world would not be the same' - JR Oppenheimer changed the world we now live

in with his directorship of the *Manhattan Project*, developing the first atomic bombs, dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This 4.5% pale ale is brewed with American Simcoe hops for a pineapple and grapefruit explosion on the palate, and a clean pine bitterness. One for the Hopheads!



The *Vale Brewery* shop, behind the *Hop Pole*, will be offering all the *ABC* beers for you to take away - check their new website at www.aylesburybrewhouse.co.uk for news and updates!

Chiltern Brewery

Having launched *Chiltern Black* 3.9% vol as a third addition to its range of permanent draught ales, the *Chiltern Brewery* has renamed one of its founding brews, *Chiltern Ale* to *Chiltern Pale Ale*, in their 35th year. This not only marks many years as a successful family business that the Jenkinson family has been brewing, but recognises the growing desire amongst drinkers to know more about the styles of the beers they are drinking.



Chiltern Pale Ale (3.7% vol) will remain the same popular pale amber ale, with grapes and honey, and a refreshing creamy smoothness which is designed as an aperitif or as a drink on its own. When this beer was first launched in 1980 it was the first commercially brewed new beer in Buckinghamshire since the war and takes its name from the brewery. It has certainly stood the test of 35 years consistent brewing and continues to be a firm favourite.

The new pump clip will be introduced in June.

Chiltern has introduced eye-catching new packaging in line with its new branding for its 18 and 36 pint packs to complement the existing 8 pint pack, which is well worth a look. Ideal for sharing at parties, gatherings and events, these can be ordered for collection on 01296 613647 or by popping into the brewery shop.

All new labelling for their range of bottled and bottle-conditioned beers will also soon be visible on the brewery shop shelves, as the project to bring all labelling in line with the new branding comes to fruition.

Malt The Brewery

Malt Dark Ale has won a Silver award at the National Beer Competition run by the *Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA)*. The win was announced at *SIBA's* BeerX celebration of British beer, on Thursday 19th March.



Presenting the Awards, *SIBA* chairman Guy Sheppard said, 'With 800 brewers now within *SIBA's* membership, competition for our awards is fierce and these winners can be very proud of their achievement. We congratulate them on brewing a beer that has been judged one of the best in the country and wish them every success within the vibrant, innovative British brewing industry.'

The win is extra special for Team Malt. They nearly missed out on being in the competition. A burst water main outside the brewery on brew day put the 'competition brew' in jeopardy. Quick thinking and re-planning by the team, including the brewer driving the finished ale to its destination, meant *Malt Dark Ale* was able to win Silver.

Rebellion Brewery

April's beer is *Seven Seas* (4.2%). The distinct malty flavour and red colour comes from the addition of Munich dark malt to the grist. Full bodied, smooth and subtly hopped, you will have to search the seven seas to find a better pint! Malt: Maris Otter Pale Ale, Crystal, Chocolate, Dark Munich. Hops: Brewers Gold, Phoenix, WGV.



They welcomed *Zebedee* back to the brewery in March and are brewing through April. Very popular as ever, spring is finally here. Strength: 4.7%. A straw coloured,



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MORE LOCAL BREWERY NEWS



pale ale for the Spring, with a clean, fresh and uncomplicated taste. The hops add a crisp bitterness, making it very drinkable.

The developments are still going at the brewery. Over the next couple of months they will be replacing brewing kit and installing brand new tanks (see the photo above).

Tring Brewery

The brewery continue to invest in the changes to benefit quality of output and customer experience with the introduction of a new cask washer and in-shop sampling station. Both should be in place by the end of April.

The decision to change the winter seasonal from *Brookmans Winter Ale* to *Redshank* has definitely paid off. 'Customers have really taken to this beer, so much so that we extend its availability beyond February and into March', commented Ben Marston.

Those of you who tried the

popular monthly special *Piggott's Pale* may have also managed to try a limited quantity of the dry hopped version of this beer. Feedback from

brewery tours and supplied pubs was incredibly positive and the brewery

will be continuing these experiments with the view to launching something special later this year. On the subject of monthly specials, keep an eye out for the April special, *Ramscoat* and May special, *Dockey*.

As of the end of March the brewery are pleased to announce the return of bottle-conditioned *Tea Kettle Stout* and *Crowning Glory* to the brewery shop to sit alongside bottled versions of *Side Pocket*, *Ridgeway*, *Death or Glory* and *Colley's Dog*.

And finally all those who attended or indeed missed out on last year's well dressed fundraiser, the *Dapper Drinker*, you'll be pleased to hear that a follow up event will be taking place in June this year. As before the final attendees will be drawn in a ballot from a list of those registering an interest. Head over to the brewery website for more details.

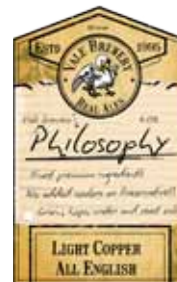
Vale Brewery

It's not just the logo and pump badges that have had a facelift - you'll be pleased to know that 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!

In between new websites and drinking beer, *Vale* decided to brew some new beers! March saw 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!

April brings *Philosophy*, an all-English affair, copper coloured at 4.0%. The philosophy at *Vale* is simple; use the highest quality Warminster Maris otter malt, the finest hops from around the world, fresh water, and yeast, to produce clean, pure, award-winning beers with no artificial additives, colourings or flavours. It's real ale how real ale should be.



In support of *CAMRA's* Mild Month of May, promoting a unique, often underappreciated, style of beer, they are brewing *Maelstrom*, a 4.1% dark mild, with subtle roasted flavours and a smooth finish. This is in addition to the award-winning *Black Swan Mild*. *Vale* are one of only a few breweries in the country able to brew a mild permanently.

Finally, *Vale Brewery* are proud to announce the opening of a brand new pub! Just 20 minutes from Aylesbury, completely refurbished with eight real ale handpumps for *Vale* and guest ales, as well as craft keg beer. Where is this pub, you ask? It's in the market town of Winslow! The *George*, on the Market Square, will be open this month and will be a friendly, local beerhouse the town has been screaming out for! Plus, it's on the 60/X60 bus route from Buckingham to Aylesbury! Follow the pub on Twitter @GeorgeInWinslow to keep up do date!

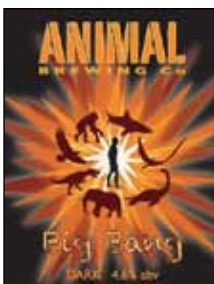
XT Brewery



It's interesting how tastes have moved on in the last few years - the *Bastard Bunny - Double IPA* at 7.2% sold extremely fast and to a wide range of pubs which a few years ago would have been rather more cautious of a full strength extra hoppy beer. The market certainly seems to be looking for a wider choice of beers these days. The *Bastard Bunny* was a collaboration between *XT Brewery*, *MoogBrew* and the artist Dave Anderson. The beer was brewed at *XT* and used multiple additions of full flavoured American

aromatic hops; both the cask and keg versions sold well and a bottled version will be available.

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 newbies.



The Animal range has been joined by two new beers for the spring:

Big Bang (4.6%) - Exploding out of the eternal darkness of roasted rye - a dark amber ale with coffee-toast flavours, and slowly evolving into an Anglo-American hop finish.

Woosh! (4.6%) is an amber beer layered with light biscuity Vienna malts and a rich fruity filling of

new world of hops.

The award-winning *Pi* mild will make a welcome return for late April and May - a deep dark mild rounding up to 3.141% abv.

XT Brewery will be holding their Spring Open Day on Saturday 25th April from 10:30 - free entry, local food, kids, dogs and grown-ups all welcome, a wide range of beers all at just £2 per pint.





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CHEERS AND ENJOY!



The **Gravediggers' Arms** is probably the worst pub in England and its microbrewery produces brews even more foul than the tempers of its unhygienic regulars. Beers like *Toxic Sludge* and *Undescended Gonad* would give even the most fanatical beer ticker the hangover from hell.

Nestling in a very non-idyllic setting between the abattoir and toxic waste dump, The **Gravediggers'** is the ultimate pub you wish you hadn't stumbled into.

Follow the mind-boggling schemes dreamed up by landlord James and Mazz, his sometime mime-artist barmaid in their futile attempts to turn the **Diggers** into a viable pub but find each attempt is frustrated by the incorrigible locals, Old Pete, Old Joe and Old Moses.

The Gravediggers' Arms by **Charlie Mackle** collects the first thirty instalments of life in the **Gravediggers' Arms**, published from 2009-2014 in *Swan Supping*, the magazine of the *Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe Branch of CAMRA*, and offers a humorous take on the many current issues faced by the country's finest institution – the Great British Pub.

The Gravediggers' Arms by **Charlie Mackle** can be found as an ebook for Kindle on www.amazon.co.uk for less than the price of a *Wetherspoon's* pint. Profits will be contributed towards **CAMRA** funds.



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GRAVEDIGGERS - THIRTY-FOUR

It was a typical afternoon in the **Gravediggers'** public bar. After downing their standard lunchtime gallons of *Septic Fleabite* and *Undescended Gonad*, Old Pete, Old Joe and Old Moses had customarily collapsed under the bar in a heap and were becoming stuck fast to the pub's filthy floor.

'Almost peaceful and soothing, the sound of that all snoring,' Mazz said, giving the glasses a rinse out with sulphuric acid. 'You know people rush round such a lot these days and are always glued to their social media on their smartphones. They don't realise the benefit of relaxation like the old timers do. The simple, natural life.'

'Well, I won't be relaxed if we don't take any money through the till for the rest of the day,' James said. 'If this lot want to use the place as a hotel then they can pay for their space on the floorboards.'

'Mmm...' Mazz had stopped listening. Her attention had been captured by her favourite show on daytime TV – *Loose-Tongued Lassies* – with guest star, chart-topping, ex-*G Factor* contestant, Belinda Botox, who was talking about the health regime that apparently made her skin so extraordinarily smooth.

'I don't need to tell you that me diet is strictly macrobiotic with alternating days of quinoa, kelp and freekeh. And I keep myself fully irrigated, like,' Belinda told the women presenters in her Geordie accent. They were all eager to share the secrets of her youthful appearance.

'And, of course, I have a properly strict and regimented sleep regime, which I carefully plan to coincide with the tidal movements in a mystical Northumbrian bay full of vibratory energy sourced direct from a ley-line to Lindisfarne Island, like.'

'It must be a challenge to manage your sleep biodynamically with your jet-setting life,' Judy Thinnigain asked Belinda sympathetically.

'That's sooo true,' Belinda replied. 'I'm dead good at the meditational technique of focusing on my inner chakra to help me drift off but sometimes I wish there was some kinda magic potion I could drink which would just knock me out like a light.'

'I find listening to celebrities droning on about health tips helps me,' James said, slumping on the bar in front of the television.

'But I've not found anything yet that's like potent enough to get me off to sleep that's one-hundred-per cent derived from the earth's natural goodness,' Belinda sighed.

Mazz ran her hand over her smooth cheeks and looked at the pile of snoring bodies on the floor. She picked up her phone instantly and began frantically typing a tweet to @loosetonguedlassies.

A week later and Belinda Botox stood at the bar of the **Gravediggers'** with a TV crew and that day's line-up of *Loose-Tongued Lassies'* presenters. A group of locals watched on, including Old Pete, Old Joe and Old Moses's long-suffering wives, who'd decided it was safe to cross the **Diggers'** threshold in the company of Belinda and Judy Thinnigain.

'Without viewer Mazz here being top of the tweeters...' Judy said to camera, '...perhaps we'd never have known the amazing health benefits of good old British real ale.'

Mazz, dressed in her figure-hugging leopard skin vest, slinkily pulled a pint of *Old Sludge*.

'Oh well, me old granddad drank fifteen pints of real ale every day after he came up from the coal mines,' Belinda said. 'And he lived until he was ninety-three – and he only passed away because he got hypothermia when he went out in the Toon in January with no shirt on. So I knew that real ale was real good for you, like, but it was always the colour that put me off – I mean who drinks brown?'

Right on cue, Mazz pulled a pint of *Purple Poisoner* and handed it to Belinda. 'And that's where the **Gravediggers'** ales come in,' she said with a smile. 'The recipe for this one is over a hundred years old.'



'Now this purple matches me hair so much better,' Belinda said.

'And do you specially colour your beers?' Judy asked.

'No, it's all down to the completely natural ingredients,' James said. 'That one takes its colour from putrefying badger roadkill.'

'You can't get much more free-range than that,' Belinda said approvingly but carefully avoiding drinking the ale.

'Now, can we have some volunteers to show just how effective this ale is as a natural sleep inducer?' Judy said.

Old Mrs Joe forced her way to the front of the throng, downed a pint of *Old Sludge* and dropped to the floor instantly. Old Mrs Moses repeated the process with a pint of *Fit Shaced*.

'Amazing,' Judy said. 'Goodbye Mr Insomnia!'

'And as well as knocking yer out cold, this beer does all sorts of other healthy things,' Belinda said. 'Like the sludge at the bottom of yer pint makes a face mask that actually glows in the dark so you can read your *Hello* magazine by it.'

Mazz demonstrated by scooping out the dregs of the *Purple Poisoner* and spreading it over her cheeks and forehead, taking on a dazzling fluorescent glow.

'If drinking craft beer wasn't stylish enough for the kids these days then wait till they start pasting it all over their faces,' Belinda enthused. 'I'm planning to bring out a range of beauty products based on these brilliant natural beers, all themed around the different tattoos I have on my intimate body parts.'

'And some of the beer has a therapeutic benefit on the digestive system too?' Judy asked.

'Oh yeah. To think that I used to pay specially to have me system irrigated every week,' Belinda said. 'Now if I drink a pint of *Sphincter Loosener*, it clears it all out for me naturally and re-diversifies me internal flora and fauna! Cheers!'

Belinda grabbed the nearest pint and took a swig.

'Er, wasn't that the experimental triple-XXX-strength version of *Sphincter Loosener* that we brewed solely for Old Pete's consumption?' James whispered to Mazz.

Suddenly Belinda's face turned pale. 'It's certainly...very...effective.' She clutched her stomach and then dashed off screen.

'The Ladies is outside next to the pig sty,' Mazz shouted as Belinda ran into the public bar, holding her knees together. 'Try the Gents, if you dare.'

As Judy introduced a hastily-scheduled commercial break, Belinda let out a scream and yelled: 'This is just *too* organic'.

'I never thought I'd hear her say that,' Judy said to Mazz. 'Mine's a *Blandweiser*'.

Charlie Mackle

Branch Diary

Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!

April

Wednesday 1st SOCIAL

8.15pm Peacock, Henton, 8.45pm Lions of Bledlow, 9.30pm Red Lion, Longwick

Friday 3rd GOOD FRIDAY BEER FESTIVAL SOCIAL

2.00pm Hop Pole, Aylesbury

Thursday 9th AYLESBURY SOCIAL

6.30pm, King's Head, 8.30pm Old Millwrights Arms

Monday 13th BRANCH MEETING

8.00pm, Swan, Great Kimble

Saturday 18th PUB BEER FESTIVAL SOCIAL

12 noon, Wheel, Naphill

Thursday 23rd LACEY GREEN SOCIAL

7.30pm Black Horse, 8.30pm Whip.

Saturday 25th BREWERY VISIT

Red Squirrel Brewery. This trip is fully booked.

Please check the website for late cancellations by anyone already booked.

Tuesday 28th HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN CENTRE SOCIAL

6.30pm, Belle Vue, 7.15pm Sausage Tree, 8.00pm Bootleggers, 8.45pm Hobgoblin.

May

Thursday 7th SOCIAL

8.30pm Bell, Chearsley, 9.15pm Seven Stars, Dinton.

Monday 11th BRANCH MEETING

8.00pm, Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow (venue tbc).

Saturday 16th READING PUB CRAWL

Start 12 noon, Fisherman's Cottage, Canal Way, Newtown, RG1 3HJ.

Wednesday 20th SOCIAL

8.00pm Squirrel, Booker, 8.45pm Grouse and Ale, Lane End, 9.30pm Chequers, Wheeler End Common.

Saturday 23rd POP UP PUB SOCIAL

12.30pm, Buckland Pop Up Pub, Buck Inn, Village Hall, Buckland (near Aston Clinton).

June

Saturday 20th BLACK COUNTRY COACH TRIP

Join in on the best day of the year! Please email the editor (editor@swansupping.org.uk) to book yourself in (spaces are limited!).

Further details can be found on our website

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Copy deadline for next issue (due out 29th May) is 14th May 2015.

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