

**FREE**

# Swan Supping



**Issue 118**

**Feb/Mar 2017**

**THE  
BERNARD  
ARMS**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

**Last Rites for  
the Bernard  
Arms?  
See Page 4.**

**Newsletter of the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch of CAMRA**

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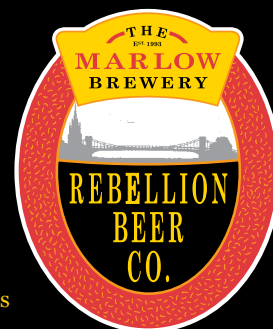




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## NEWS FROM THE EDITOR



This issue features our first article by the **CAMRA National Chairman**, Colin Valentine, who is extending a welcome to all **CAMRA** members to go along to our **AGM & Members' Weekend**, which will be held in Bournemouth from the 7th-9th April 2017. The revitalisation project and the fact that **CAMRA** now has 185,000 members (see below) are sure to feature heavily.

Our own branch AGM will take place at the **Royal British Legion** in Marlow (winner of the **Regional Club of the Year** award for the last three years) on Tuesday 28th of February starting at 7pm. All local **CAMRA**

members should attend as the direction of our local campaigning and the new committee will be decided there. It won't all be business however, as we will allow plenty of time for drinking and socialising, especially over the buffet and during the bottle raffle which is run to raise branch funds, so please bring along a bottle to donate to the prizes.

The sad news is that it looks like the fight to reopen the **Bernard Arms** in Great Kimble has failed - see page 4. This is despite a lot of work by local members and its place in history as it was the closest pub to Chequers and has been visited by many foreign dignitaries over the years.

There is better news, however, about our **Winter Pub of the Year**, the **Red Lion** in Knotty Green, which was due to close at the end of January. The developer who was hoping to take over the site and build houses has dropped out so this **Punch** pub will stay open for now. More details about the presentation

etc. can be found in our Local News section.

The branch held its Christmas social at the **Black Horse**, Lacey Green in December.

Despite there being thirteen at the table, which is supposed to be unlucky, we had a great time (see the picture above). We would like to thank Lynne and all her staff for their hard work, their hospitality, the wonderful food and an excellent range of beer in tip-top condition

I'll have to think of something really special to do for our next issue as it will appear twenty years to the month of the first issue of **Swan Supping**. Bryan Spink and I were joint editors all that time ago and I have shouldered all the blame since he left the area around the end of the last century. That must be worth a few beers!

My thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of **Swan Supping** either by way of writing articles, sending pub news and pictures. Special thanks to Colin Stanford for the cartoon (his fortieth for the magazine), and those hardy souls who deliver the finished magazine to the pubs, breweries and festivals etc.

*David Roe, Swan Supping Editor*



## NATIONAL CAMRA NEWS

### *CAMRA membership soars*

The **Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)** has just signed up its 185,000th member, reinforcing its place among some of the top membership organisations in the UK - and boasting numbers above all but one of the major political parties.

The milestone member was one of hundreds signed up at the recent **Manchester Beer and Cider Festival**, one of **CAMRA's** many successful annual events, which saw nearly 15,000 visitors enjoying real ale, real cider and perry last week.

The organisation's current membership puts it ahead of the Conservative Party, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and UKIP. Only the Labour Party has more members!

After 45 years of being one of the largest single-issue consumer groups in the world, **CAMRA** is still seeing nearly 10,000 new members join each year. Issues facing the beer and pubs industry still top the agenda for many, with **CAMRA's** key campaigns including the protection of pubs from closure, keeping beer affordable and promoting the wellbeing benefits of visiting your local continuing to strike a chord.

**CAMRA** made the headlines last year when it embarked on a member-wide consultation about its future direction and purpose to ensure that it remains relevant 45 years on from its founding. The proposals put forward by the committee charged with running the Revitalisation consultation suggested that **CAMRA** could make numerous changes to its campaigning and activities to better represent the modern beer and pub world. A final decision on the proposals will take place at **CAMRA's Members' Weekend** in 2018.

Colin Valentine, **CAMRA's National Chairman** says: 'It is fantastic to see our membership continue to grow year on year at such a successful rate. **CAMRA** remains an attractive organisation in this day and age because of our ability to adapt to the new issues that face the beer and pubs industry.'

We have seen the world of beer change significantly since 1971, with the rise in breweries and rapid closure rates in pubs, which is why we continually evaluate our purpose and strategy to reflect these changes. As a result, we are looking forward to another 45 year of pub and beer campaigning!'

### *Shadow Communities Spokesperson backs House of Lords vote for greater pub protection*

Lord Roy Kennedy of Southwark, Shadow Spokesperson for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), has confirmed his support for strengthening planning laws to protect vulnerable pubs across England. In the recent House of Lords debate on the Neighbourhood Planning Bill, Lord Kennedy promised to propose an amendment to remove permitted development rights for pubs so that they are protected under the planning system.

In his speech at the despatch box, Lord Kennedy said 'I also give notice to the Minister that we shall be proposing an amendment in Committee to remove the permitted development rights for pubs in England and to place pubs in a class of their own. Permitted development rights allow the change of use of pubs to retail and temporary office use without planning permission, with communities denied a say over the loss of valuable community assets. We are presently seeing 21 pubs close a week. That is most regrettable, and we need to act save our pubs.'

While the lack of protection in current legislation has galvanised community groups across the country to protect their locals by registering 2000 pubs as **Assets of Community Value (ACV)**, the process has proven to be lengthy and bureaucratic for both community groups gathering supporting evidence for their nominations, and local authorities who preside over **ACV** applications. Lord Kennedy's proposed amendment would therefore take pressure off local community groups to individually list pubs and councils which are burdened with red tape.

Colin Valentine added 'We have seen communities across England go through the process of nominating their pub as an **Asset of Community Value**. This shows a huge appetite for protecting pubs, which are more than just businesses - they are invaluable landmarks in our communities. Unfortunately, the **ACV** process can be time-consuming, fraught with difficulties and at the end of the day is only a temporary measure - listings must be renewed every five years to maintain protection. It simply doesn't make sense that pub-goers have to jump through these extra hoops when it is clear that so many communities overwhelmingly want a say on the future of their much-loved pub. We thank Lord Kennedy for his sensible proposals and hope that they are carried forward in the Bill.'



# FIGHT OVER FOR THE BERNARD ARMS

Just before Christmas, Wycombe Council approved the demolition of the historic **Bernard Arms** in Great Kimble and its replacement by private housing. The council took over two years to reach a decision after developers submitted the plans in 2014. **Swan Supping** reported at length about the many objections to the plans, including from **CAMRA**, large numbers of local residents and the local parish council.

Unfortunately, there is no right of appeal for objectors when planning permission is granted and this historic building will soon disappear.

Being the closest pub to the Chequers estate it has welcomed Prime Ministers and many world leaders for a few off-duty pints. Before the pub stopped trading in 2011, the pub had many historic photographs on display of visits by the likes of President Eisenhower and letters of thanks from past Prime Ministers who valued pubs far more than their recent successors.

Anyone who's travelled between Aylesbury and High Wycombe will have noticed the state of dilapidation that the pub has been allowed to fall into over the past few years. At the very least let's hope some of this history can be preserved for the benefit of the local residents deprived of a valued community facility.

As far as the **Bernard Arms** decision goes, it looks like we'll just 'have to live with it', as the phrase goes and it would be fruitless to hold a post-mortem into the planning department's decision.

However, the fate of the **Bernard Arms** raises serious questions about how similar pubs under Wycombe council's jurisdiction will be protected from development into housing in the future. Both **CAMRA** and the local community made substantial efforts to object to the destruction of a local community asset and we believe we need strong reassurances from the council that this decision does not set any precedent.

For example, we need to be assured that other pubs within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be protected from speculative development. It is normally exceptionally difficult to obtain planning permission to build any new private housing in an AONB, let alone demolish a community facility to do so.

Our local branch has been praised at a national level for ensuring the majority of the pubs in the area are protected through **Asset of Community Value (ACV)** status. While there's currently no obligation for pub owners to sell a threatened pub to a community group, even if a market price is offered, **ACV** listing is explicit recognition that the pub is prized as a local community facility. Given that **ACV** status protects a pub from some changes of use while it is open, planners ought to take a particularly rigorous approach to any applications to remove the community asset altogether.

We also need to be assured that planners assess a pub's viability according to its potential rather than the trading history of recent managements (or the absence of any trading at all because owners have chosen to shut a pub and leave it to become derelict).

After all, it's only a few years since the branch's current **Pub of the Year**, the **Cross Keys** in Thame, seemed to be unviable and in danger of imminent closure. Within a few months, dedicated and entrepreneurial management – with a commitment to great beer – had turned the pub around and it's now packed every night.

There are many similar success stories where pubs in our branch area have been reinvigorated by new owners and management. Many have been bought by or on behalf of local communities. This long list includes the



**Pilgrim** in North Marston, **Crown** in Sydenham, the **Seven Stars** in Dinton, the **Boot** in Bledlow Ridge, **Garibaldi** in Bourne End and **Russell Arms** in Butler's Cross.

We would like to see local councils in our branch taking robust action against pub owners who either deliberately run the businesses down (by opening infrequently, for example) or destroying the fabric of the building either by unauthorised demolition or deliberate neglect (which amounts to the same thing).

For example, Westminster council recently instructed a developer to reinstate the demolished **Carlton Tavern** brick-by-brick and Chilterns council insisted on the reopening of the closed **White**

**Lion** in St. Leonards.

While not as comprehensive as **CAMRA** would prefer, there are many protections available under current planning laws to protect pubs. However, it is up to councils to enforce these protections when considering planning applications.

Unfortunately there have been many other instances recently where Wycombe Council has allowed pubs to be closed. On the A4010, the same road as the **Bernard Arms**, we have lost what was the **Rose and Crown** in Saunderton and the **Black Prince** in Princes Risborough within the last couple of years.

Rather than allowing the closure of pubs, we believe that our local councils should explicitly incorporate the protection of all local pubs in their area as part of the local plans which guide their planning policy, following the recent example of Cambridge City Council and Wandsworth Borough Council in London.

It's ironic that all our local planning departments are currently consulting with local residents about managing the government's targets for a massive increase in housebuilding. In the case of Wycombe, this has led the council to propose an increase in housing in Princes Risborough of approximately fifty per cent. Aylesbury has recently been given 'garden town' status to recognise its huge developments.

With any influx of population, community facilities and infrastructure must be improved – and surely this means pubs as well as shops, schools and factories?

As a recognised consumer organisation, the local **CAMRA** branch has asked for an urgent meeting with Penelope Tollitt, Head of Planning and Sustainability at Wycombe Council, where we will express our concerns about any precedents set by the **Bernard Arms** decision and to press the council to do more to protect its pub heritage. Depending on the result of the meeting we may try to engage members in a concerted campaign.

In the meantime, as council officers should be ultimately accountable to their elected representatives, we urge local **CAMRA** members and readers of **Swan Supping** who are concerned about the loss of pubs to housing developments to email or write to their district and parish councillors and local MPs. Thriving pubs have been proved to be catalysts for thriving communities (and to appeal to the most mercenary instincts of non-pub users, a true local pub boosts house prices too).

If we don't act to insist that the traditional British pub be protected then we risk losing it for our and all future generations' enjoyment.

(The planning application and its history can be viewed on the Wycombe Planning Portal using the reference 14/07190/FUL.)

**Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe Branch Committee**



## HADDENHAM WINTERFEST

On December 10th 2016 over 1000 people descended on Banks Park in Haddenham for the annual **Winterfest**. Held each year in a massive marquee this is the Haddenham Village Christmas Party.

Over the next six hours everyone had the opportunity to sample a superb array of food, gins, ciders, wines and real ales.

We are very fortunate, in this area, to have so many really excellent breweries and we love to support and showcase them at our festivals. Consequently we had beers from 13 local breweries and of the 40 casks of real ale on offer (and all consumed!) only 11 were non-local.

Gin is the spirit of the moment with a huge number of craft distilleries springing up. We had 8 new and fascinating gins to choose from and they proved so popular we could easily have doubled that number! Many pubs now stock an interesting range of specialist gins and if you haven't tried one then I urge you to do so – you won't be disappointed and it's another good reason to support your local!

The traditional ciders and perrys were as popular as ever and even the mulled cider and wine went extremely well despite the weather being fairly mild throughout the day. To keep everyone well fed, food included Scotch Eggs, Pulled Pork, Barbecue, Pizza and Fish & Chips.

Entertainment was provided by a number of great local bands and musicians who played throughout the day with a variety of original and cover songs plus the odd sprinkling of Christmas favourites. Of course, the Haddenham Mummers were ever present with their traditional fun filled



antics and, for the first time, we had a fabulous magician who amazed everyone with his close-up magic and conjuring.

More fun was provided by a Crimbola (ok, it's a tombola, but with a Christmas twist!) and a Christmas Jumper competition, the winner of which was presented with a bottle of champagne donated by our local importer, moorechampagne.com.

**Haddenham Beer Festivals** are a charity with all proceeds going to local good causes. We hold two festivals a year and would like to thank all our sponsors, helpers and

volunteers without whom the festivals would not be possible. If you would like to know more about the festivals or would love to help or sponsor then please go to [haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk](http://haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk).

If all this has whetted your appetite then the next **Winterfest** is on December 9th 2017.

But before that we have our fabulous **Summerfest** on July 1st 2017 where we will have up to 150 real ales on offer as well as plentiful ciders, wines, prosecco and even more music and food (and there are rumours of an additional craft ale bar! Shhh!)

Details for all festivals will be on the website as they occur and discounted online tickets for **Summerfest** will be available very soon – keep checking! Don't miss it, it's a great day out for all the family!

*Pete Summerskill*

*Photo: Keith Milmer, haddenham.net*



## MARLOW ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

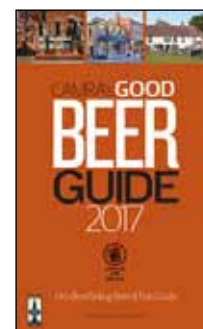


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## LOCAL NEWS

### ASHENDON

The Aylesbury Vale Village Pub Guide has recognised the **Hundred of Ashendon** as 'One to Watch' an accolade to Matt and his team in making this a destination pub. Well-kept ales include *Hundred of Ashendon Ale* from *Vale* and, more often than not, a choice of *Sidepocket for a Toad* from *Tring*, 4 from *XT*, *Beechwood Bitter* from *Chiltern* and *Roasted Nuts* or another from *Rebellion*. This, combined with food, and bed and breakfast if required, make it worth travelling the extra mile or so to visit.

### AYLESBURY

*Wetherspoon's* have refurbished the **Bell**, a beautiful grade II listed building, back into a hotel. The hotel now has fourteen bedrooms which can be made up as twins or doubles, all with an en suite, plus tea- and coffee-making facilities. The rooms all have air-conditioning, a plasma TV and hairdryer. There is unlimited free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel and bar area. The pub has a courtyard and two cosy fires for the winter months, with an extensive range of food and drinks.

The **King's Head** has been continuing what has now been an early-year feature for six years, their 'Celebration of Porters, Stouts and Old Ales'. This year alongside traditional cask-conditioned beers still to come such as *Big Lamp Embers* (5.5%), *Acorn Gorlovka Imperial Stout* (6.0%) and *Batemans*

*Salem Porter* (4.7%), there have been a number offered as keg beers. But most of these 'keg' beers are in fact cask-conditioned beers in liners inside the keg either using the non-reusable KeyKeg system or, as is the case with the *Chiltern Black* (3.9%) served from a keg font in the **Farmers' Bar**, in a liner in a reusable keg. In both cases no gas comes into contact with the beer. This maximises the limited cellar space for the offering of cask-conditioned beer but the downside is that the beer is dispensed very cold – so best to let it warm up a bit before drinking to get the full flavour. Cask-conditioned beers in lined kegs still to come as part of the 'Celebration' will be *Kernel Export India Porter* (6.4%) and *Anspach & Hobday The Stout Porter* (8.5%).



On a recent visit to the **White Swan**, although they had only one handpump, their *Caledonian Swan & Symphony* (aka *Edinburgh Castle*) was superb.

### CADSDEN

It's been widely reported that a Chinese investment company has bought the **Plough** in Cadsden following the famous fish and chips and *Greene King IPA* visit by the Chinese president in 2015. The pub has since been very busy with Chinese tourists who apparently stop off on their way back from Bicester Village. As there are even plans for the pub to be recreated in detail across China in a chain of hotels, it seems doubtful that the new owners will want to change anything in the original version. Perhaps Theresa May should take the Chinese president on a pub crawl the next time he drops into Chequers leading to more local pubs being preserved in this way?

### CUBLINGTON

When last visited the **Unicorn** had three ales available on handpump, *XT4* at £3.10, *Fullers London Pride* at £3.90 and *Timothy Taylor Landlord* at £4.70. It was however in perfect condition. A fourth ale was about to be changed.

### GREAT KIMBLE

The **Swan** has introduced a Friday night takeaway menu. LocAles from the likes of *Loddon*, *Tring* and *XT* are available to slake the thirst of anyone waiting for their food.

### HIGH WYCOMBE

The **Red Squirrel Emporium**, following the January 28th launch of two new beers from the brewery, should feature *Short Days* and *Long Nights*, a Vienna IPA and a Black Session Ale.

The **William Robert Loosley (Billy Bobs)** ceased to be *Wetherspoon's* on Sunday 22nd of January and after refurbishment was due to reopen under the new ownership as *Swan Supping* went to press. Most staff are being retained. More news next issue.

### KNOTTY GREEN

Our *Winter Pub of the Year* award, voted on by local *CAMRA* members went to the **Red Lion**. The presentation of the certificate is pictured above as our Branch Chairman, Simon Isted, hands it over to the landlord, Steve Scowen. A shame about the location of the picture,

but it was the best that could be done as the pub was very busy. The date of the presentation had to be arranged in a rush as the pub was due to close at the end of January. However we understand that the developer who was going to buy the pub has pulled out and for the moment **Punch** are keeping the pub open. The locals are working hard to get the finance together to buy the pub and keep it open. At least it's got a reprieve and won't be closing soon. They have promised to keep us informed of any developments.

### LACEY GREEN

Any concerns about what might happen at the **Whip** now that Nick Smith (pictured right) has left and retired to Somerset after having his first day off in eight years seem to be as all recent reports have shown that the pub continues in good hands under the **Bootlegger** (High Wycombe) management, although the freehold remains with *Enterprise Inns*. The two youngsters running the pub are reported as enthusiastic and attentive and keen on continuing Nick's great tradition of retaining it as a village pub and offering an interesting selection of quality ales including many locally brewed ones. Amongst local beers tried were *Tring Moongazer* in 'stonking nick' and a very good *Rebellion Winter Royal*. The food was excellent which was had at a table in the bar as the restaurant was fully booked. Good to see it so busy. They are looking to run the quiz once every two weeks on a Tuesday evening starting at the end of January. Their facebook page is live as well as their website <https://www.facebook.com/WhipInnPub/> where all events, beer on tap and food menus can be viewed. Why not join us for our Branch Social starting at 7pm on Thursday 23rd of February (see page 18 for a full list of our socials) and make your own mind up.

### MARLOW

Some dates for your diary: Friday 28th April until May Day Monday 1st May - Springfest 2017 beer festival at the **Royal British Legion Club**. Friday/Saturday/Sunday 2/3/4th June - **Marlow Football Club Beer Festival**. Saturday/Sunday 15/16th July - *Rebellion Brewery* Open Weekend.

*Greene King* owned O'Donoghue's pub in Spital Street still awaits confirmation of when chef Tom Kerridge may be taking charge. Relief managers Niamh and Steve have enjoyed their time in charge here but will be leaving as we go to press and we wish them well at their new home running *Greene King* pub the **Punchbowl** in Abingdon town centre. New relief management is due to take over from the beginning of February. Real ales at O'Donoghue's continue to be mostly from the stables of *Greene King* and *Rebellion* with occasional guests from *Timothy Taylor* such as *Landlord* and *Boltmaker*.

### OVING

At the **Black Boy** a special St. Valentine's Day Menu is now available for advance bookings which are recommended. Recent offerings on the ale front include *Animal Heron*,



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## PIDDINGTON

Nigel Wakefield at the **Dashwood Arms** says that an encouraging sign for this local has been the better than usual lunchtime clientele this January. Pictured below is the excellent range of ales that were available during January.

## PRINCES RISBOROUGH

The **Bird in Hand**, which was taken over by a new tenant in September, has been reported as being closed since the start of January with a blackboard outside stating the closure was 'until further notice'. This is a well-regarded **Greene King** local and we await developments with interest.

## QUAINTON

Ales seen at the last visit to the **George & Dragon** were **Animal Heron**, **Chiltern 300's Old Ale**, **Otter Winter Warmer** and **Vale Wychert**. Upcoming events include: a cheese and wine evening on Sunday 5th February, a bingo night on Sunday 12th and a St. Valentines Day menu for Tuesday 14th February.

## STEWKLEY

As the **Swan** continues to develop and grow in popularity a fifth handpump has been installed and is already in regular use albeit normally quieter at this time of the year. Two guest ales, currently **Courage Directors** and **Lancaster Blonde**, accompany the three regulars; **Butcombe Best Bitter**, **Courage Best** and **Timothy Taylor Landlord** (at £3.60). More social events are planned including regular Quiz Nights and Live Music.

## THAME

Cold winter nights. What to do. Let's do a pub quiz. Quizzers can get their

quiz fix four nights running now that the **Birdcage** has started a Monday night quiz, starting at 8.00 with two/three ales available, Tuesday is down at the **Rising Sun** where Thame's longest running quiz takes place from 8.30 with Thame's friendliest quizmaster and again three ales available, Wednesday quizzers can join in the Bingo Quiz at the **Cross Keys** at 8.30 – two rounds of 25 questions with answers given in a random order so that anyone with a correct completed line on their card can win and not necessarily the team that answers the most correct questions. Finally starting at 8.00 on Thursday the quizzers can move to the **Falcon** to get their fix and drink **Hooky** ales. All of the pubs keep their ale in good condition, so combine general knowledge with good ales for an enjoyable evening.

## WENDOVER

The **Twist Restaurant** in the High Street was renamed **Lucca** in December. In its time it has been called **Point**, **Twist**, **Robina's**, **Rossini's**, **Swan & Brewer**, and **Two Brewers**. Still real with one handpump serving **Rebellion IPA**!

The **Village Gate** at World's End had a low key reopening around Monday 9th January following some refurbishment works. When recently visited it was serving **Tring Side Pocket for a Toad**, **Sharps Doom Bar** and **Rebellion IPA** all at £4.00 per pint. Staff confirmed that it is a **Punch** pub although the sign outside says 'Free House'.

## WHITCHURCH

The **Fullers** owned **White Swan** is to benefit from a thorough refurbishment due to take place during March. Prior to that on the 21st February National Clander Day will be celebrated together with a Quiz.

## WINGRAVE

The recently opened Tea Room (pictured top right) at the **Rose & Crown** looks busier at each visit – ideal in a village location where other venues are lacking. There are plenty of events on the calendar in the pub here as well. These include an 'Oooh L'amour' lovers menu for St. Valentines Day evening on 14th February, a ukulele band at 12noon on Wednesday 15th, an American Diner Evening on Saturday 25th and an Open Mic Night on Tuesday 28th February. Ales served at last visit were **Burton Bridge Best Bitter**, **Sharps Doom Bar** and **Tring Brock Bitter**.



## WINSLOW

The **12th Winslow Beer Festival** will take place on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th of March at the Public Hall, Elmfields Gate, Winslow, Bucks. MK18 3JA.

There will be 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, the line-up includes a varied selection of over forty 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 fund-raising 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 are available in advance from 1st

March at the **Bell Hotel**, Market Square, Winslow. Details of the beers that will be on offer will also be available from 1st March on the Winslow Lions Facebook and Twitter Pages. This is the Lions' twelfth festival and has proved to be very popular so ensure you get your tickets early, as venue capacity will restrict numbers. More details will be available on their website [www.winslowlions.org.uk](http://www.winslowlions.org.uk).



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## A TASTE OF HILLFIRE

Inspired by the stunning lakes and mountains of the American Pacific Northwest region, Neil Coxhead set up the **Hillfire Brewing Company**, to produce craft beer using hops sourced from the region.

Taking on a 550 sq ft unit on the Rabans Lane Industrial estate in Aylesbury, having a 2.5 barrel plant with two fermenters, capable of two brews per week installed, Neil produced his first beer in January 2016.

The name of the brewery comes from the view of the Cascade hills of North America. Whilst there on holiday he saw the sun setting behind them and the fiery red glow made it seem that the hills were on fire. Cascade hops feature in Neil's American style craft beers which also use fine malted English barley.

Neil started home brewing when he was at college, starting with a kit from Boots then moving on to using natural ingredients. After gaining a degree in Electrical Engineering he went into Information Technology and Telecoms. However, after taking a redundancy package in 2015 from BlackBerry where he was working in Telecoms Project Management, he decided to sink his savings into a brewery. The main difference in the working conditions is that instead of sitting behind a desk all day Neil is on his feet most of the day.

As an active member of the **Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead CAMRA Branch**, living within a short walk of the **White Horse** at Hedgerley, Neil's early brews found an eager market at the pub and the branch's beer festival.

Neil has the in-depth knowledge of hops and barley that comes with an obvious love of his having turned his hobby into his living. He has also travelled widely, not only to America but to Canada and Belgium to extend



this knowledge, so we can look forward to varied and interesting beers in the future.

The main beers brewed by Neil are 3C, a 3.9% beer made using three hops, Columbus, Cascade and Chinook, **California Gold** a 4.3% Cascade single-hop beer and a 5% American style stout called **Nighthawk**.

In a very competitive market, Neil's beer has been welcomed at many pubs, hopefully not just because they are something new, and have proved very popular at the **Old Millwrights Arms** in Aylesbury, where I had my first taste of 3C, served by the brewer himself at a recent beer festival.

The brewery can be found at 23 Edison Road, Aylesbury HP19 8TE Phone: 01296 338521

The brewery shop is open Friday 4pm - 9pm and Saturday 11am - 2pm  
**David Roe**



THE SWAN  
STEWKLEY

### So it's the New Year and we have plenty of new things coming to The Swan in 2017

New play equipment for the garden, fundraisers, ale and cider festivals, garden parties, 3 day music festival and we have loads more plans in the pipeline!

We will keep you all updated, you can also follow us on our Facebook page or just come in and see for yourselves.

[www.facebook.com/The.Swan.In.Stewkley/](http://www.facebook.com/The.Swan.In.Stewkley/) 01525 240285

#### The Swan is:

- ✓ Child friendly
- ✓ Dog friendly
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- ✓ Sky sports
- ✓ BT sports
- ✓ Live music
- ✓ Quiz nights
- ✓ Large beer garden
- ✓ 3 house ales +
- ✓ 2 weekly guests

#### Opening times

Mon 17:00-00:00  
Tue-Fri 12:00-00:00  
Sat 12:00-00:00  
Sun 12:00-23:00

#### Quiz nights @ The Swan

We have a new quiz master here at The Swan who will challenge your minds for only £2pp with teams of up to 6, there will be a prize for the winning team and a chance to win the jackpot round!! Dates will change from month to month but will always be on a Wednesday night from 8:30pm so keep checking in so you don't miss out, Feb/Mar quiz dates are: Feb 1st & 8th, Mar 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th



Our 3 house ales are **Timothy Taylor Landlord**, **Courage Best** and **Butcombe Bitter**, but that's not all.... We also have 2 guest ales that change weekly!

After the brilliant response from those of you that came to see our live singer in January, We are now aiming to provide live entertainment at **The Swan** at least once a month. For details phone 01525 240285 or see us on Facebook.





## CAMRA NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



### Why I'm looking forward to Bournemouth 2017

This April, I will be joining **CAMRA** members from across the UK in the seaside resort of Bournemouth for **CAMRA's Members' Weekend**, which includes our National AGM and Conference.

I have been attending the **CAMRA Members' Weekend** for almost 30 years, well before I was active nationally, never mind National Chairman. Those of you who were in Norwich in 2013 may remember that I still have my glass from my first AGM weekend, as they were then called, in Norwich in

1990. Even prior to becoming Chairman, I always made an effort to travel to whichever corner of the country the weekend was held and have only missed one since then - and was even organiser in Edinburgh in 1998. It has always been, and still is, an opportunity to meet with old friends, make new acquaintances and socialise with other **CAMRA** members from across the country.

Most importantly, the **Members' Weekend** is a fantastic opportunity for any member across the organisation - whether you have just joined, been a member for 20+ years, active or inactive - to shape the future direction and purpose of **CAMRA**.

As Chairman, I now have the great responsibility of making sure that the AGM and Conference part of the **Members' Weekend** is run successfully and open to every single one of our 185,000 members. This year, that responsibility is even greater than ever before.

Following 50 consultation meetings across the UK and three national surveys, we have now seen the proposals that were put forward by the **Revitalisation Project** Steering Committee on **CAMRA's** future. Whether you agree or disagree with the proposals, took part in the consultation events or stayed at home, the **Members' Weekend** will be the opportunity to discuss them inside and out ahead of a decision next year.

Over the weekend, members will be able to consider the **Revitalisation Project** and proposals on the future of **CAMRA** in a series of discussion groups. It will be your chance to have a say on the **Revitalisation Project's** findings and represent your views in the debate. A final decision on the proposals will then be taken at the **Members' Weekend** in 2018.

I am proud to chair an organisation that is a true democracy - where every member has the opportunity to feed into our policies, direction and future. I never forget that without our huge membership base and dedicated volunteers; there simply would not be a **Campaign for Real Ale**.

I hope you will consider joining us in Bournemouth this year. The closing date for registration is Friday 17th March 2017. For more information simply visit [camraagm.org.uk](http://camraagm.org.uk).

**Colin Valentine**  
**CAMRA National Chairman**

# SMALL BATCH SPECIALS

# INDIA

# OATMEAL

# STOUT

# MILD

# SMOKED

# PORTER

# PILSNER

# TRING

BREWERY Co.

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER, FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM FOR NEWS ON OUR SMALL BATCH RELEASES  
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Burton-upon-Trent is the capital of British beer. At one point in the nineteenth century a quarter of all beer in the country was produced in the Staffordshire town and even nowadays, with the massive consolidation and rationalisation of the brewing industry, that figure can't be too far short.

A clue to why Burton is an ideal location to brew beer is in the town's name – the 'Upon-Trent' part. The river flows through the town from its catchment area in the Peak District and brings a source of water uniquely rich in the minerals required to make perfect beer. Burton water accentuates hop characteristics, especially less dark varieties like pale ale and IPA. Virtually all breweries across the country add minerals to their water supply to attempt to replicate the Burton effect.

Therefore, for beer-loving **CAMRA** members, Burton-upon-Trent is a place of pilgrimage. On the last weekend in November a group of local members made the hallowed journey.

Half-an-hour's ride north-east of Birmingham, it's feasible to visit the town on a day-trip by train. Unfortunately, a combination of engineering works and a Chiltern Railways and a well-known local coach operator's shambolic attempt at a rail replacement bus service made the outset of my journey memorable for all the wrong reasons. I was transported all of three miles in the first 90 minutes. Such is weekend rail travel these days – others in our party also suffered rail-related frustrations.

Nevertheless, determination in the face of adversity meant all of our party managed to arrive at our first destination, the **National Brewery Centre** in time to tag along on the guided tour. We were an eclectic bunch – comprising me, Simon, Brian and Eddie from the local branch plus Antony from



Reading and a three of my friends (Andy from London plus Joe and Jeff on a Thanksgiving break – all the way from Chicago, Illinois).

The **National Brewery Museum** is on the edge of the vast **Moors-Colson** brewery site. This occupies a massive area in the centre of Burton (probably three-quarters of a mile from one end to the other). Until the industry changes prompted by the beer orders, this was the headquarters of **Bass**, the biggest brewer in the country – now transferred to overseas owners – as has happened to so much of the brewing industry.

The site still churns out massive quantities of beer, although not beer likely to pass many **CAMRA** members' lips. It's mostly the likes of **Carling Black Label** and who knows what else. The scale of the operation is impressive nevertheless, with rows of enormous fermenting vessels and huge grain silos visible from the outside.

The **National Brewery Centre** used to be called the **Bass** brewery museum before that once proud company disappeared. It still possesses a poignant sense of the power of the British beerage. It's also host to the **William Worthington** microbrewery, which brews **Worthington White Shield** for current owners **Coors**, as well as a range of excellent beers sold under the **Heritage Brewery** brand. Sampling of these is included in the price of the ticket at the end of the tour.

The museum sprawls over several buildings and would repay at least half-a-day's visit. Our guided tour was led by an entertaining, retired brewing chemist who used to work in the laboratories and provided a fascinating series of recommendations about the health-giving benefits of beer, especially for skin and complexion (**CAMRA** should have him lobbying the government!).

Many **CAMRA** members' hearts sink on a brewery visit if the brewing process is explained in great detail. While interesting the first time, it doesn't vary much from one brewery to the next. Thankfully, there's a lot more time and space devoted in the museum to other aspects of brewing and the production side is relatively brief.

Far more interesting – and what earn the **National Brewery Centre** its name – are the exhibits about the historical and social aspects of pubs and beer drinking. There are countless pub signs featuring long-lost brands and a wonderful selection of old beer cans which, while still in living memory, seem



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## A BURTON

as much from a bygone age as the shire horses in the stables.

A fascinating display was a model of Victorian Burton. This emphasised the role the railways played in transporting heavy casks of beer around the breweries and then to drinkers in the rest of the country and beyond. Criss-crossed by countless railway lines, the town had a huge number of level crossings.

My favourite part of the museum was the recreation of a 1960s pub – complete with Formica tables and a garish bar counter with, of course, no handpumps – just plastic monstrosities advertising the likes of *Worthington E*. There was also an authentic recreation of a Victorian pub. Ironically the nineteenth



century style is much more likely to be seen in modern-day pubs than the design cataclysms of the mid-20th century (although there are one or two much-loved remnants in our branch area).

One advantage of visiting the British beer capital is that the locals know a decent pint when they drink one. We had an itinerary of local pubs kindly designed for us by *CAMRA* national director, Nik Antona, no less, who lives in the town (but was unfortunately double-booked and unable to accompany us).

There's a wealth of great pubs, including five *Good Beer Guide* pubs in the town centre and a burgeoning number of micropubs.

Our first stop after the *Brewery Centre* was the famous *Burton Bridge Inn*, tap of the eponymous brewery. It's a cosy, multi-roomed pub. Although our welcome was stumbling across a dog vomiting in the bar, this wasn't enough to deter us from enjoying the likes of *Bridge Bitter* and *Stairway to Heaven*.

Round the corner was the *Fuggle and Nugget* micropub with a very warm welcome and a selection of ales served on gravity from a stillage – a beermat



left evidence of a recent beer served from our own *XT* brewery. A little further towards the town centre was the splendid *Crossing* – an elaborately decorated pub that served an impressive range of ales, including a couple from *Dancing Duck*.



Most atmospheric was the *Coopers' Tavern*, a traditional local in the shadow of the huge, modern *Coors* plant. This old-fashioned, warren of a pub also has no bar – and its varied selection of beer is also served by gravity.

Close to the station were two new micropubs. The *Last Heretic* is a cosy conversion from a shop or restaurant. It was so packed out with enthusiastic customers that one wonders why we haven't seen more beery entrepreneurs setting up similar micropubs in our branch area.

The *Weighbridge Inn* is a part of a regeneration scheme of atmospheric former coal yard buildings near the railway. Another pub on a small scale, it's owned by the *Wentwell Brewery* and offers ales from their range and other microbreweries.

It was a short hop to the station where trains home beckoned and with much ale having been consumed we felt very much as if we'd well and truly gone for a Burton.

*Mike Clarke*



**FRESH NEW LOOK,  
SAME GREAT TASTE!**



**CHEERS AND ENJOY!**



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## CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS

I am looking forward to the year ahead and I hope to see more of you at socials during this year even if you only go to one pub on the night.



We will be holding our **Branch A.G.M** on Tuesday 28th February at the **Royal British Legion**, Marlow, (7pm start) where you can stand for election to the committee and any of the offices. After many years as Secretary, Mike Clarke would like to stand down so if you would like to stand for this or any other position please email me at [chairman@swansupping.org.uk](mailto:chairman@swansupping.org.uk). You must be a member of **CAMRA** if you wish to become involved, and a membership form can be found in every issue of **Swan Supping** or you can join online at the **CAMRA** website (<http://www.camra.org.uk/>).

I am, as usual, looking for any ideas anyone has for ways we can engage more of you in our activities again if you have any suggestions please send them to me at the email address above.

The **National Winter Ales Festival** is being held in Norwich from the 21st to the 25th of February. I am told it is well worth a visit and hope to see you there.

The **National A.G.M/Members Weekend** will be in Bournemouth on the weekend of 7th to 9th of April where the revitalisation project will be discussed if you wish to attend register your interest on the **CAMRA** website.

Members please remember to enter beer scores when you visit pubs as this information is used for the **Good Beer Guide** entries so if you have a favourite pub and it has no scores during the year it won't get in. Another reason for you to join **CAMRA**.

Finally congratulations to the **Red Lion**, Knotty Green, being voted our branch's **Winter Pub of the Year** along with the good news that the buyer has pulled out and the pub will remain open with the locals trying to raise the funds to buy it. Good luck to them on that one let's hope we hear soon they have been successful.

*Simon Isted, AV&W Branch Chairman*

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## A VILLAGE GEM



The **Greyhound** at Marsh Gibbon is a village pub and restaurant on the north-western edge of our branch, close to the Oxfordshire border and only about three miles from Bicester. Proprietor Richard Kaim has been here now for over 26 years, so is therefore one of our longest serving landlords.

Prior to taking on the **Greyhound** Richard was a professional master chef in the West End of London for 25 years. He did his apprenticeship at the **Mirabelle** Restaurant in Mayfair and went on to the **Les Ambassadeurs** club by Hyde Park. Soon after taking over the **Greyhound** Richard and his Thai wife Suwanna opened the restaurant at the pub featuring Thai cuisine, which at the time was the first in Oxfordshire and has been a popular feature ever since.



The pub is leased from the Ewelme Charitable Trust which still owns many of the stone buildings in Marsh Gibbon. The trust was established around 1455 by Alice de Pole, Chaucer's granddaughter, to support the people of the village of Ewelme in Oxfordshire. Thought to be of Tudor or even earlier origin, the pub was rebuilt in stone after a fire in 1740, at a cost of 50 guineas. Two fire plaques

from Sun Insurance can still be seen in the stone work above the front entrance. One of the earliest Friendly societies was founded at the pub in 1788 – The Greyhound Friendly Society – as a sick club. A list of the founders can be seen inside the pub as can a bi-centennial commemoration plate. Now the Marsh Gibbon Friendly Society it still has nearly 200 members and organises an annual village feast in May to celebrate Oak Apple Day – (proclaimed a public holiday following Charles the Second's accession in 1660, abolished 1859). This is held at the village hall after a procession through the village led by the Marsh Gibbon Silver Band.



Another chapter of the history of the **Greyhound** was that it was the home of one of the country's few micro-breweries in the 1970's – **Phillip's Brewery** was located in the outbuildings which are still alongside the large car park behind the pub.

The comfortable interior of the main bar features a large log burning stove which is most welcome in these cold winter days. Exposed beams and the thick local stone walls add to the atmospheric appeal. In the other bar area on the restaurant side of the pub there is another delightful stove set in an inglenook fireplace above which hangs the Friendly Society plate.

Three ales are regularly served, all on hand-pumps. **Greene King Abbot** has always been popular here (as long as I can remember anyway). **Fullers London Pride** and **Sharps Doom Bar** are the alternative choices. The **London Pride** was in particularly fine condition when sampled on my recent visit. Following the success of the Thai food they also have two other restaurants, in Bicester and Whitney. For more details phone 01869 277365 or visit [www.suwannathai.co.uk](http://www.suwannathai.co.uk)

**Mick White**



## THE CHILTERN BREWERY



**NEW**

**Longer shop opening hours**

- see website

**NEW**

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**NEW**

**Mini Casks**  
8 3/4 pints



[www.chilternbrewery.co.uk](http://www.chilternbrewery.co.uk)



# LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

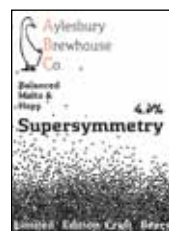
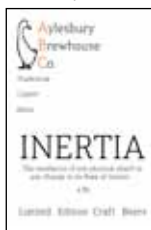
## Aylesbury Brewhouse Co.

It's been all go at **ABC** with beers coming out left, right and centre and there's still a load more to come. Throughout the next few months you can expect to find dark, hopped delights alongside pale Germanic styles and massively hopped citrus lovelies.

What's coming up:

**S\*M\*A\*S\*H** 4.3% Pale and hoppy. Nice and simple this one: Single malt - Maris Otter and single hop - Simcoe. Done.

**Inertia** 4.1 % Traditional copper bitter. The resistance to any change in motion.



**Δ** 4.6% Heavily hopped IPA low colour crystal malts and tonnes of hops (Citra, Chinook and El Dorado) for those addicted to the latest super hoppy hand-crafted accessory. To satisfy the hardest hop users they're going to be dry-hopping this one too.

**Supersymmetry** 4.4% Well-balanced. Supersymmetry is a proposed type of spacetime symmetry in particle physics.

## Chiltern Brewery

The **Chiltern Brewery** shop in Terrick now has longer opening hours. Details are on the website [www.chilternbrewery.co.uk](http://www.chilternbrewery.co.uk) which also offers a new online service for draught ales – click and collect. ‘Click’ - place - your order online and then collect from the brewery shop at a time convenient to you. You can call and collect too on 01296 613647.

With click and collect you have the same great selection of draught ales on offer. There are new carry-out containers too - 8 ¾ pint / 5 litre Mini Casks. You get the ales fresh from the brewhouse in perfect condition and they are great for social occasions.



**Brewery shop open:**

**Monday to Thursday 9.30-4.30**

**Friday & Saturday 9.30-6.00**

Take home fresh beer available in 2 litre bottles and 5 litre mini-casks. Also a wide selection of bottled beers and brewery merchandise.

Pre-order beer in 36 and 72 pint casks.

**Love beer? Come and join our friendly Beer Club**

(for details see website - [xtbrewing.com](http://xtbrewing.com))

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01844 208 310

[www.xtbrewing.com](http://www.xtbrewing.com)



New limited edition draught ales for February and March are the return of **Earl Grey IPA** – available now - and **Pride of Bucks & Berks**, planned to launch in mid-March. At 3.9% volume **Earl Grey IPA** is an extra pale refreshing citrus ale - spicy and floral – infused with family tea company Birchall's fragrant and bright Earl Grey tea from the Virunga National Park in East Africa – which proceeds from the tea help to support. The best malting barley and freshest English hops guarantee a refreshing citrus burst with every sip of this beer. **Pride of Bucks**

& **Berks** is 4.2% volume, dark amber in colour with smooth roast malt tastes. Five pence from every pint of this ale sold will be donated to a local charity that was still to be announced at the time of going to press. The ale has been brewed in recognition of George and Tom Jenkinson and the brewery winning the ‘Pride of’ these two counties in the Buckinghamshire and Berkshire Life Magazine Food and Drink Awards 2016 which we reported last issue. A proud moment indeed.



Bottled ales, including new **Black IPA** and **White IPA**, are available in the shop and to order online for delivery – together with the wide range of foods, many made with the beer. Both IPAs are limited edition bottle-conditioned and aged 18 months. Dark ruby **Black IPA** 7.8% volume brings the best of stouts and IPAs together in this increasingly popular style – smooth roasted with liquorice notes and a sumptuously hoppy aroma. Golden caramel **White IPA** 7.5% volume marries full-bodied Maris Otter with wheat malts and keeps a dry malt base in a beautifully balanced ale.

A reminder too for coeliacs and those intolerant to gluten that four of the bottled beers have been formally certified as gluten free.

## Malt The Brewery

January saw **Team Malt** busy renovating. Both with the development of a new shop and tasting area as well as a refreshment of the brewery hall floor.



Given the work going on, **Team Malt** needed to move the January members night. Rather than change the date, they asked Phil at the **Polecat** if they could hold the members' night there. Just a short walk from the brewery and given the temperatures in January it turned out to be a very welcome change. The swing in temperature to such a warm cosy pub did make for a thirsty group...almost drinking the **Polecat** dry despite the large delivery of **Malt Ale** earlier in the week!

It was great evening and really showcased what a great place your

local pub can be on a cold winter's night.

**Malt The Brewery's** new shop and brewery visitor area will be finished by the end of January. The brewery will be open to the public seven days a week from February. For more information including new opening hours visit [www.maltthebrewery.co.uk](http://www.maltthebrewery.co.uk)

## Rebellion Brewery

In December the **Rebellion Brewery** made some local brewing history!

**Winter Royal**, brewed by the **Wethered Brewery** of Marlow was a favourite beer for many in the local area becoming one of their flagship beers. After the brewery closed in 1987 **Winter Royal** production ceased, until, using the same recipe, they produced a batch as a one-off special.

Rebellion are very proud to be part of the Marlow community and they're happy to have brought some of the town's brewing history back to life. What made their

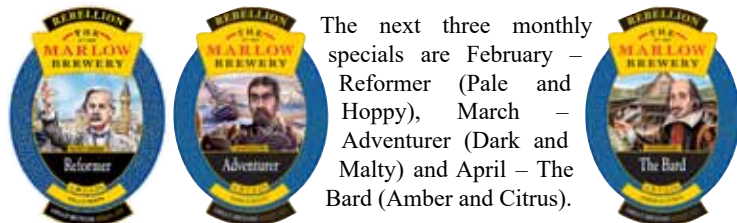




# MORE LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

*Winter Royal* special is the fact they used only malted barley grown on Bencombe Farm in Marlow Bottom for the brew. The crop was harvested from the field immediately opposite the brewery earlier in the year and it's fantastic to be able to use such local produce.

*Winter Royal* is a rich, dark and malty beer and at 5.4% it is the perfect winter warmer, just like it used to be. Those who tried it really enjoyed it, whether they remembered the original or not and it is likely to return as a pre-Christmas special.



The next three monthly specials are February – Reformer (Pale and Hoppy), March – Adventurer (Dark and Malty) and April – The Bard (Amber and Citrus).

## Tring Brewery

With the arrival of 2017 comes a new raft of monthly specials and excitingly a new range of small batch beers. The small batch project evolved during 2016 as the brewery experimented on their 200 litre test kit. The results of these experiments were drip-fed into the public domain primarily through local beer festivals. January 20th saw three of the



range, a Smoked Porter brewed with peated, distillers malt, a mosaic hopped India Stout and Oatmeal mild. These will be joined by a Pilsner, Rye IPA and other new styles later in the year. Based on feedback these beers and other will then be brewed on the brewery's new eight barrel kit which is to be commissioned in the coming weeks.

## Vale Brewery

To welcome the New Year of 2017, *Vale's* head Brewer, David, is pleased to announce brews to reflect the forthcoming seasons (hopefully), with a traditional English brew for January moving through to a fresh golden ale for Spring!

*FitzRoy* 4.0% - chestnut. Vice Admiral Robert FitzRoy developed accurate weather predictions for the safety of shipping and fishermen, which he named 'forecasts'.



*Donne* 3.8% ruby red. John Donne's famous poem from 1624 'No man is an island', has inspired the head brewer to create this ruby red bitter, combining European hops and strong roast malt flavours.

*Hooke* 4.3% straw yellow. Robert Hooke was an important English architect of his time who is also well known for his detailed illustrations.



## XT Brewery

The latest annual special for 2017 is the brand new: *XT-17* – this will be an evolving range of single hop special beers. The base has a red rye malty backbone, giving a very light pale red colour and the hint of tartness from the rye. Onto this base a changing run of single hop additions will be carefully blended. The first brew is the Kazbek, a spicy and lemony flavoured Czech hop.



New Hop Variety, Experimental Special: *XT-Jester Experimental* – the English hop growers are developing new hop varieties and *XT* has been selected to work on this project by brewing experimental beers using these new hops.

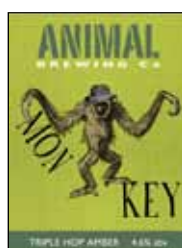


The varieties are still in development, are only available to the partner brewers and only have code names. The first of the new variety beers uses CF125 – if this sells well, then the variety will be moved to large-scale production growing and given a more catchy name.



*Animal Kiwi*, a very pale NZPA showcasing what New Zealand has to offer. Brewed with NZ Hops, generous lashings of Green Bullet and Wakatu added during the boil paired with Motueka and Wai-iti dry-hop additions. The beer has layers of hop characteristics and flavours to enjoy. Lemon, lime zest, Mandarin, raisin and vanilla all come to the party with floral notes dancing throughout. This cold-fermented, dry beer is for the hop lover who wants a taste of down under.

*Animal Monkey*, a triple-hopped pale amber: triple and hopped being the key words. Utilising hops from the US, Europe and NZ, added at three different stages during the boil and then dry-hopped, this beer is packed with flavour. Citrus notes, mainly lemon/lime and grapefruit, with delicate floral and tropical notes to end with. *Monkey* has a malty backbone of biscuit, rye and hints of caramel giving a satisfying finish.





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# THE WHEEL

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Good Beer Guide: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 & 2016



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## GRAVEDIGGERS - PART FORTY-FOUR

It was a quiet, wintry night in the public bar of the **Gravediggers' Arms**. Mazz was collecting spiders' webs from the glasses shelf to add to the fermenter in the microbrewery. James was gently sponging the bar counter with sulphuric acid, having realised it wasn't beer that was making the surface sticky but a mysterious substance that appeared to ooze off the regulars like invisible ectoplasm.

The only customers were Old Moses, Old Joe, Old Pete and Young Duwayne, hunched over the bar, sipping pints of *Septic Fleabite*.

Half an hour passed in total silence. The locals were happy to converse with each other using a crude communication system based on the emission of the inevitable noxious smells caused by ingestion of the **Gravediggers' beer**.

'What do other empty pubs do to liven up their evenings?' James asked.

'Dunno? Lively's overrated to me,' Old Moses grunted.

'Darts?' Old Joe suggested.

'Was a rum old do the last time we had a darts match,' Old Pete said. 'Gave that team of mad scientists from the **Rotting Carcass** up the road a proper whipping.'

'Until one of the chemists on their team stole urine samples from the gents. He only went and dope tested them, which got us disqualified from the local league. Who'd have thought *Old Gangrene Stout* was a controlled substance,' Mazz said.

'And the physicists proved that the gases from the *Fit Shaced* bent the space-time continuum and diverted their darts away from the bulls eye,' James added.

'Experts, what do they know?' Young Duwayne grumbled.

'I got a good one,' Old Moses laughed. 'Why don't you get one over on those real ale tickers by getting some fake pumps and and plastering 'em with tantalising pump-clips for made-up beers except we say on 'em in tiny writing 'Not Ready Yet'?'

'That one's been done already,' James shook his head ruefully.

'Male strippers?' Young Duwayne shouted excitedly.

Everyone turned and stared at him in disbelief.

'Well, I'd be up for it,' Young Dewayne protested.

'That's *exactly* why we won't be doing it,' Mazz said with an expression of horror on her face.

'Philosophy circle?' James suggested in desperation.

Mazz's expression was, if anything, even more dumbstruck.

'No, you dummies. What we need is a comedy club! It's cheap. You just put one bigmouth on a stage with a microphone.. As the audience is listening and not yakking to each other then they're swilling down our booze even faster than usual. And if we run an Open Mic night we don't even have to pay the comedians.'

'Aren't those comedy audiences a bit rough?' Old



Moses asked, letting out a belch while inspecting his *Undescended Gonad*.

'If we clear the manure out of the barn at the back then we've got the perfect venue,' James said.

\*\*\*\*\*

The comedy nights got off to an initially quiet start but rapidly built up a word-of-mouth following on the alternative scene – the main words coming out of mouths concerning the stupendously strong ales on tap at the **Gravediggers**.

One advantage, which wasn't lost on the performers, was that the **Gravediggers** provided the drunkest audience in the country. They were so sozzled they would laugh uproariously at any utterance from the comedian, no matter how vaguely it resembled a joke. In truth, many of the villagers in the audience laughed manically to themselves in real life anyway.

The comics could also get away with performing less material as their sets needed to be short enough to finish before the crowd toppled into their customary drunken stupor.

Word got round among producers of dire, unfunny sitcoms that this was the audience to provide hysterical laughter tracks for their productions – provided that a copious barrels of *Pickled Newt* or *Old Ratarsed* were on tap for refreshment.

The comedians welcomed hecklers from the **Diggers'** clientele – shouts from the audience like 'You're less funny than my favourite cow' would produce outrageously witty rejoinders.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the **Diggers'** comedy club success was the cult following that the comedy cognoscenti bestowed on the local performers. This began after Old Pete and Old Joe had stumbled on stage one night, disorientated after a particularly traumatic visit to the Gents.

Old Joe and Old Pete had abused each other in colourful language for the navigation malfunction but their foul-mouthed slanging match sparked considerable jollification from the audience. A

visiting comedy promoter from London persuaded the pair, after several pints of *Purple Poisoner*, to go on stage and improvise their slanging match on every comedy night.

'You're a complete \*\*\*\*\*', Joe,'.

'And you, my dear Pete are the biggest \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* who's ever lived in this village.'

This was all gentle banter compared with the obscene conversations at the **Gravediggers'** bar that caused gross offence to any other customers in earshot. However, swearing being their stock-in-trade, the alternative comedians considered the locals true masters of the art.

'So edgy,' Millie Merkin commented.

'It's meta-ironic, of course,' Seamus O' Irishbloke boasted.

'Those dudes are just born to swear...and swearing's what we \*\*\*\*\* do, guys, yeah?' replied an apprentice comedian, Josh Poshball, just graduated to the scene by way of Eton and Oxford.

Within weeks, *Decomposing in the Gravediggers'* garnered a weekly live spot on blokey digital TV channel, Kevin (which was then repeated endlessly all week).

These unscripted ramblings of drink-sodden old yokels climbed the ratings and began to alarm members of the comedy establishment, who'd made their reputations with more cerebral performances, such as pulling funny faces or yelling abuse from the stage at the most timid audience members.

And stakes were high. Comedy wasn't just the new rock and roll. It was becoming the nations' new favourite spectator sport – constantly on television, with commentators remarking that the Edinburgh festival was like the 'new Olympics'.

\*\*\*\*

The **Gravediggers'** success was tempting James and Mazz to consider ditching the pub and brewery and theatrical agents had signed up the whole village.

However, one night, during Old Joe and Old Pete's TV show recording, a smiley, rotund man in a suit skipped into the Diggers' club.

'I'm Mickey Sparewheel, president of the Hammersmith Chapter of the National Union of Alternative Comedians. I demand the whole **Gravediggers** comedy club be dope tested.'

'Well, there are plenty of dopes in here for sure,' Mazz said.

'You've been running the club using banned substances.' One of the sore loser scientists from the **Rotting Carcass** appeared beside Mickey. 'Comedians have used dodgy stimulants for years but your yokel beers like *Old Gangrene Stout* give you a completely unfair advantage.'

'Who says?' Old Pete shouted from the stage.

'The Supreme Court.' Mickey brandished a piece of paper. 'This irrefutable judgement was made in favour of us comedians of the metropolitan elite. As far as all your comedy careers go – you're fired.'

Charlie Mackle

## Branch Diary

*Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!*

### February

#### Wednesday 1st WENDOVER SOCIAL

7.30pm Pack Horse, 8.15pm Red Lion, 8.45pm White Swan, 9.30pm King and Queen

#### Monday 6th BRANCH MEETING

8.00pm, Dereham's Inn, Loudwater.

#### Tuesday 7th HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIAL

6.30pm Red Squirrel Shop, 7.30pm Bootlegger's.

#### Thursday 23rd ONE PUB SOCIAL

7.00pm onwards, Whip, Lacey Green.

#### Tuesday 28th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.00pm, Royal British Legion, Marlow

All local **CAMRA** members should attend and help decide the direction of the branch for the coming year. A buffet will be available and a bottle raffle will be held (please bring along bottles to be raffled off).

### March

#### Thursday 9th BOURNE END SOCIAL

7.30pm Black Lion, 8.15pm Keg, 9.00pm Walnut Tree, 9.45pm Garibaldi

#### Tuesday 14th BRANCH MEETING

8.00pm, Cross Keys, Thame

#### Saturday 18th BEER FESTIVAL SOCIAL

12 noon, Public Hall, Elmfields Gate, Winslow, Bucks. MK18 3JA.

#### Wednesday 22nd SOCIAL

8.30pm George and Dragon, Quainton, 9.30pm White Swan, Whitchurch.

#### Saturday 25th LINE 300 BUS CRAWL

Start 12 noon, King's Head, Aylesbury via Stoke Mandeville, Princes Risborough, Lacey Green, Naphill to finish in High Wycombe.

#### Tuesday 28th THAME PUB CRAWL

Start 7.00pm Six Bells, working way up High Street to finish at Cross Keys.

### April

Friday 7th - Sunday 9th **CAMRA's AGM & MEMBERS' WEEKEND**  
Bournemouth International Centre, Exeter Rd, Bournemouth.

Further details can be found on our website  
[www.swansupping.org.uk](http://www.swansupping.org.uk), facebook  
and meetup.com

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[www.swansupping.org.uk/joinin](http://www.swansupping.org.uk/joinin)

## Swan Supping

Swan Supping is distributed free of charge to pubs in the branch area.

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Copy deadline for next issue (due out 31st March) is 14th March 2017.

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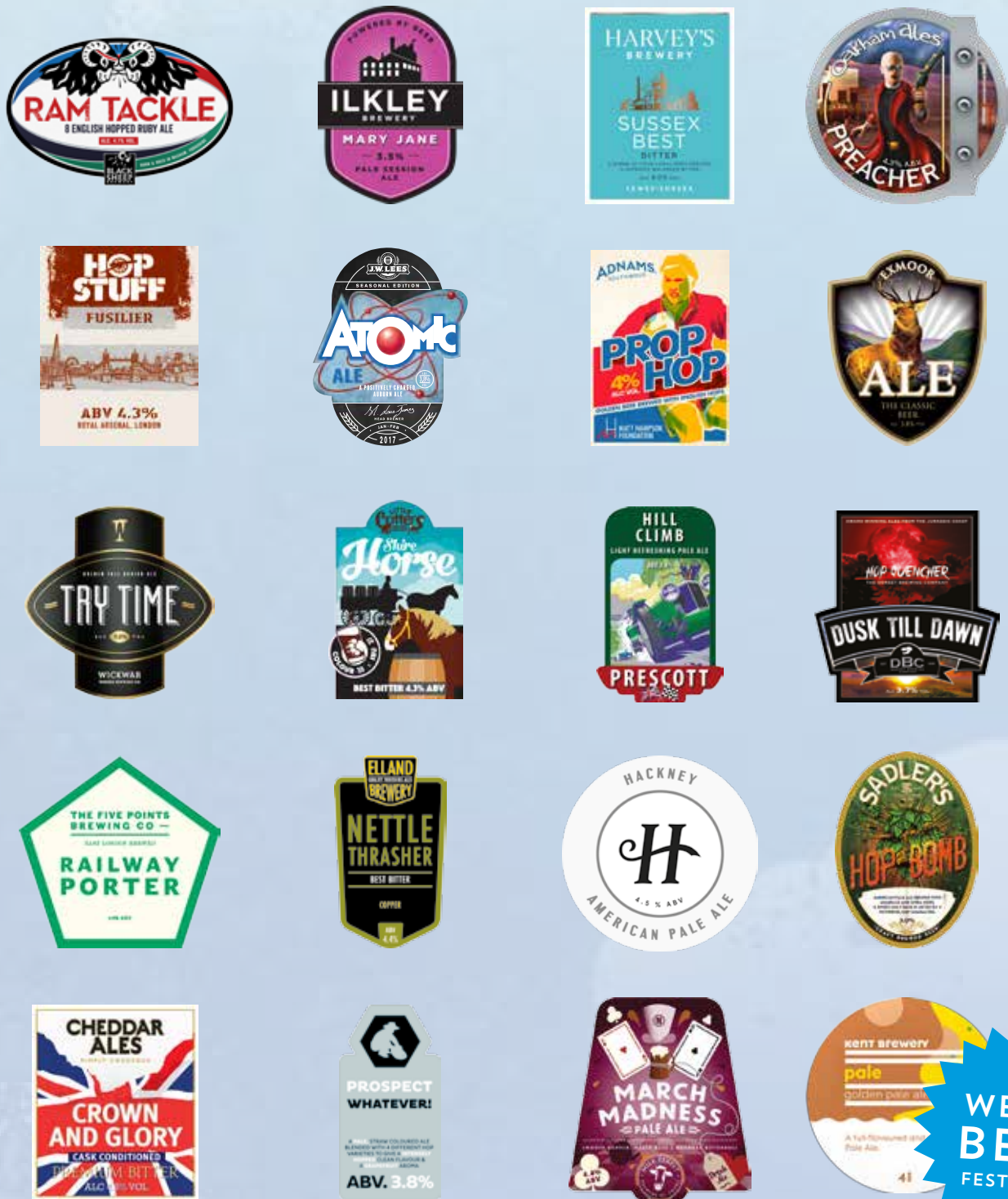
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