

**FREE**



# Swan Supping

**Issue 94**

**Feb/Mar 2013**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

**COVER STORY**  
**Aylesbury Vale**  
**& Wycombe CAMRA at the**  
**Mother of all Parliaments!**  
**See centre pages**

**Newsletter of the Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch of CAMRA**  
**[www.swansupping.org.uk](http://www.swansupping.org.uk)** **Circulation 6000**





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## NEWS FROM THE EDITOR



### Beer Tax Escalator

In December last year, **CAMRA** organised a lobby of Parliament to protest against the punitive tax applied to our favourite tittle. Around 1,200 **CAMRA** members rallied to the cause and went up to London to make their feelings known, talking directly to their local MPs.

Our branch was well represented in this lobby and a few of us can be seen in the front cover photograph which was taken by our branch chairman, Alex Wright.

The lobby was well organised by Jackie Parker, who was our Regional Organiser before progressing to the National Executive of **CAMRA**. We all met up at the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster to register, then headed off to either book an appointment with the local MP or, as in my case, head off to a prearranged one.

As there were so many people heading to the lobby it meant that the queue to get through security was quite long and it took over half an hour before the staff could make sure that we hadn't tried to emulate a certain person who gets ceremonially burned every November the 5th. Alex Wright and myself met with Tom Harlow, a member of staff from our local MP (David Lidington) who was unable to meet us in person (he's a very busy man).

However, we managed to get our views across and we were contacted by David Lidington who passed on our views to the Treasury. Subsequent emails, however, show that the priorities of the Government and the Treasury are to reduce the deficit and they only see the contribution made by the money raised. A serious change is required before the social and monetary cost of the pub closures caused by the duty are properly considered!

A series of MPs gave their views to the members on the lobby and all were on our side, reflecting the depth of support we have within Parliament. We

need to continue sending the message and eventually the economic sense of our cause will prevail. It will take time, as shown by **CAMRA**'s lobbying about pub companies finally getting results as shown below.

### Pub of the Year

Last issue, a request was made for your suggestions for **Local Pub of the Year**. Despite a frankly very disappointing response, we have taken note of the suggestions and decided on the following pubs for the final vote: **Belle Vue**, High Wycombe, **George & Dragon**, Quanton, **Kings Head**, Aylesbury, **Royal Standard of England**, Forty Green, and the **Swan**, Great Kimble. If you have not already had your say, please get your votes to us at **Swan Supping** by Friday 22nd of February (contact details are on page 22) and the announcement of the winner will be made at the branch AGM.

### Branch AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the **Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch** of **CAMRA** will be held at the **Kings Head**, Aylesbury, on Monday 25th of February starting at 8pm. It is important that as many local **CAMRA** members as possible come along as this is a great opportunity to have your say about how the branch is doing, whether or not we are heading in the best direction and anything else pertinent to furthering our campaign to preserve traditional beer in traditional pubs.

We always try to make the AGM as interesting as possible, although we do have to battle through some official business, with plenty of humour and, of course, plenty of opportunities to have a drink. There will be a buffet which we pay for by holding a bottle raffle and all contributions of bottles that we can use in the raffle will be appreciated. The **Kings Head** is close to both the bus station and the railway station, so there is no need to drink and drive if you want to join in.

Thanks once again to all the people who have given their free time to contribute to the production and circulation of **Swan Supping** and many thanks once again to Colin Stanford for the very appropriate cartoon.

Cheers!

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

## NATIONAL CAMRA NEWS

### Relief for Pubco pubs?

The Government has announced action on unfair large pub company leases to safeguard the future of many thousands of community pubs. This announcement is the culmination of years of campaigning by **CAMRA** and over 7600 people have lobbied their MP in the past year alone.

Supporting **CAMRA**'s campaign, Business Secretary Vince Cable said:

'There is some real hardship in the pubs sector, with many pubs going to the wall as publicans struggle to survive on tiny margins. Some of this is due to pubcos exploiting and squeezing their publicans by unfair practices and a focus on short-term profits. Four Select Committee reviews since 2004 have highlighted these problems.... A change in the law is now needed to shift behaviour.'

**CAMRA** Chief Executive, Mike Benner said: 'Over 3,500 tied public houses have been lost since the start of 2009. Many of these will have been lost as a result of excessive rents and by being forced to buy beer at up to 50% above market rates. The proposal for a 'fair dealing' provision will allow publicans tied to large pub companies to challenge these high prices which means fewer valued pubs will be forced to close their doors.'

'**CAMRA** fully endorses the Government's wish to ensure that tied publicans are no worse off

than free-of-tie publicans. Research shows that 46% of tied publicans earn less than £15,000 per year in contrast to 22% of free-of-tie publicans. Guest beer and free-of-tie options offered by pub companies with more than 500 pubs, long advocated by **CAMRA**, would be a straightforward means of levelling up the playing field.'

Struggling pub landlords were promised help with Business Secretary Vince Cable announcing plans for an independent Adjudicator to address unfair practices in the industry.

As well as the new Adjudicator Dr Cable also wants to establish a new statutory Code to look at the relationship between large pub companies and publicans, which will be enforced by the Adjudicator. This new Code will ensure fair practices for a number of issues including rents and the prices publicans pay for beer. It would also have the power to investigate and deal with disputes between pub companies and publicans, and in some cases have the power to fine.

In particular, the proposed Code would prevent abuses of the beer tie, which oblige publicans to sell particular types of beer. It would enshrine the fundamental principle that 'a tied licensee should be no worse off than a free-of-tie-licensee' which will ensure a level playing field is maintained in the pub sector.

The formal consultation on these proposed measures will be launched in the spring.



### Community Pubs Month

Running throughout April 2013, the aims of this campaign are to encourage pubs to organise and market a number of events in April which will hopefully result in more trade.

Community Pubs Month kicks starts a year's activity to help support **CAMRA**'s Key Campaign of 'Raising the profile of pub-going and increase the number of people using pubs regularly.' See [communitypubsmoonth.org.uk](http://communitypubsmoonth.org.uk) for more details.



## GARIBALDI BOUGHT



In our October/November issue, we highlighted the threat to the **Garibaldi** pub in Hedsor Road, Bourne End. Its owner, **Punch Taverns Ltd**, had temporarily closed the pub and put it up for sale.

This traditional 19th century pub, named after Guiseppe Garibaldi's visit to nearby Cliveden in 1864, has been the centre of the local community for more than a century, and now that self-same local community has gathered together to buy the pub.

A consortium of local villagers have banded together following a 'Save the **Garibaldi**' campaign, raising a total of over £380k and exchanging contracts with **Punch**. They expect to take over the freehold of the pub on February 8th. Part of the money raised will go towards necessary renovations, though about another £15k is required to complete the work.

We hope to do a larger feature on this wonderful news in a later issue. They are all to be congratulated on their success so far and we wish them all the best for the future.

## FALCON SUCCESS



As part of Chinnor Rugby Club's 50th year celebrations, the club will be serving **Falcon Bitter** alongside **Brakspear Bitter**.

CRFC Club Steward, Lewis Thompson, who is pictured left, liaised with **Vale Brewery** to produce the dry hopped **Falcon Bitter**. Note the original pub sign in the background hanging in the bar from the **Bird in Hand** pub in Chinnor where the rugby club was founded 50 years ago this year.

**Vale Falcon** is the result of combined efforts by Lewis and Kate Parker and David Renton at **Vale Brewery**.

**Falcon** is **Vale's Red Kite Bitter**, with the addition of dry hops in the cask. **Red Kite** is a malty beer brewed with four different malts and four hops from the USA, Germany and good old English Fuggles. David then chose to dry hop with Calypso a new American hop developed in 2011.

Dry hopping is a method to impart strong hop aromas into a beer, a method often used by American brewers but becoming much more popular in the UK. The Calypso hop imparts a grassy, fruity aroma to the beer, making **Falcon** a unique drinking experience.

The 4% bitter sold out before the finish of the recent Saturday game against Bournemouth. The club is currently above mid-table level in National League 2 South.



## The Anglers Retreat Spring Beer Festival

Wednesday 20th - Sunday 24th March 2013

Startops End, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Buckinghamshire. HP23 4LJ t: 01442 822250 e: anglersretreatpub@gmail.com

This traditional pub with a unique atmosphere has been a focal point for the surrounding villages for more than 250 years and stocks a fine selection of beers and locally brewed ales. The stream running through our cellar enables us to keep their beers in tip top condition.

### '...14 festival ales and 3 draft ciders...'

Open all day we are regular hosts to beer enthusiasts, walking groups, cyclists, fisherman and birdwatchers. The menu changes on a daily basis, with a great selection of homemade food that uses a wide selection of locally grown produce.

If you are working nearby or just want to enjoy the surrounding area and stay a little longer, accommodation is usually available, just phone and ask on tel: 01442 822250.



Pub opening times  
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## LOCAL NEWS

### ASHENDON

The **Gatehangers'** clientele don't go for anything over about 4.0% ABV which is probably why The **XT 25 Xmas Ale** at 4.7% wasn't overly popular. Currently **Greene King IPA** and **XT 4** are pretty much permanently available. These two are supported by the likes of **Vale Red Kite** and **Cottage Brewing MGA**. The pub's five rooms continue to help considerably with cash flow and provide punters for the kitchen. The villagers are aware of the phrase 'use it or lose it'!

### AYLESBURY

The **Britannia** is currently closed and up for sale.

Lauren at the **Green Man** has renegotiated her tenancy. After the pub was closed for a week for essential repairs, the restaurant, which was not creating sufficient footfall, has been replaced by a games room. They still claim to be the best music venue in town with live music Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. To drink they offer **Shepherd Neame Spitfire** and **Westons Traditional Scrumpy Cider**.

Eric Mills took over at the **Hop Pole** on 17th of December and is already planning his first beer festival which will be held over Easter. There will be thirty beers, eight ciders and two perries. Beer Club members can have a festival preview on Thursday 28th of March and mere mortals can join us the following day at our social on Good Friday.

Eric has been in the pub trade for a long time including stints at **Blossoms**,

a **Robinsons** pub in Stockport, and the **Wellington Arms**, Bedford, a **Banks & Taylor** pub which reached the Super Regional stage in the **National CAMRA Pub of the Year** competition while he was there.

Phil Hayes has reported to us that the **John Kennedy** in Meadowcroft has over the years had a bad name for being rough and ready. However he is the husband of one of the new owners and they have carried out a renovation, new signs have gone up and the new name of the pub is the **Kennedy**.

The people running the pub now are Mrs Janet Drake and Mrs Carol Hayes. They have worked hard to put some more of the heart back into the community. So much so they have recently attended a gala ball hosted by Sky Sports presenter Jeff Stelling in Manchester for **Best Newcomer Pub** finalists for the whole of the United Kingdom and came Runners Up!

Layla Phipps is the new landlady in charge at the **New Zealand**. This former **Charles Wells** pub, now owned by Arnold Homes, was reopened on December 8th with a ten-year lease. Popular for sport on television, the pub now offers three real ales at a respectable £2.50 a pint. The two constant beers are **Tring Side Pocket for a Toad** and **Sharps Doom Bar** with the third being a seasonal ale from **Tring** and **Besemer Ale** and **Tea Kettle Stout** have featured on two recent visits.

It seems like **Punch** should install a revolving door at the **Queens Head** when you consider the rate at which they are going through landlords there! Since

Mathew Kelly left after having run the pub for **Good Libations** for about a year, he was followed by holding managers until it was taken over by Ellie Cook in November, as we announced last issue. Ellie left early in December and we met Freda on the Aylesbury pub crawl on December 14th who had taken over that day. Freda was running the pub on behalf of **Phoenix Taverns** but when we were getting details for this column she informed us that she was leaving as **Punch** had decided against coming to an arrangement for **Phoenix** to continue running the pub and are looking for someone else. This means that the uncertainty continues for this former Branch favourite. All pubs need stability to be able to develop and grow and the **Queens Head** is no exception.

### CHEARSLEY

At the **Bell** we were really saddened to hear of Oliver's sudden and unexpected death in September 2012 at the tender age of 38 from a massive heart attack. Sharon is carrying on and we send our condolences and wish her well. She serves **Fullers London Pride** and **Chiswick** and on the third pump a **Fullers** guest such as **Jack Frost** or **Hope & Glory**. We congratulate the pub for winning the **2012 Aylesbury Vale Village Pub Competition** in the **Best Community Pub** category.

### CUDDINGTON

The **Crown** serves the **Adnam's Southwold Bitter**, **Fullers London Pride** and **Fullers Jack Frost**. Andy Berry, Heather and Dave's son, is now first choice tight-head prop for Chinnor.

### DINTON

When visited recently, the **Seven Stars** was serving **Vale Wychert**, and **Adnams Lighthouse** with **Skinners Cornish Trawler** conditioning in the cellar.

### EMMINGTON

The **Inn at Emmington** is sticking with its clientele's favourites, namely **Fullers London Pride** and **Brakspear Bitter**. As an alternative a **Rebellion**, **Vale** or **XT** is on the third handpump.

### FORD

The **Dinton Hermit** mainly serves **Vale** beers. **Best Bitter** is always available and **Brill Amber** was available when visited recently. **XT 4** has also proved popular. **XT 25 Xmas Ale** was very popular. The thirteen letting rooms are doing well providing a steady and welcome income.

### GIBRALTER

The **Bottle and Glass** keeps **Greene King Morland Original Bitter** and one other such as **Morland Old Speckled Hen**. The tie still doesn't allow Locales.

### GRANBOROUGH

The **Crown** now has a new landlord after many months under temporary management. Frank Haynes took over the lease of this **Marstons** owned pub with business partner Graham Jenner in early December. Up to three ales are available and Frank is hoping to have guests from local breweries especially **Vale**. Both **Wychert** and **Amber** were being enjoyed at the time of visit.

### GREAT KIMBLE

A big screen has been newly set up at the **Swan** to show the Six Nations

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rugby, commencing on 2nd February. There will be a pop-up French bistro on Valentine's Day and a curry night on 23rd February run by Rani, one of the villagers, who runs her own Indian food business. On Easter Saturday the pub will join in the annual Kimble Races festivities. A third handpump has been in regular use recently serving *Ridgeway* from the *Tring Brewery*. Plans are also afoot for a beer festival later in the year.

## HADDENHAM

Diary Date: The Summer Beer Festival is on Saturday 6th July 2013 from 11 am to late (or early if too many people come and drink the place dry by tea time – shock/horror – surely not) – see [www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk](http://www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk).

At the *Green Dragon*, Adam and Emma serve *Sharp's Doom Bar* and one from the *XT* stable such as 3, 4 or 6. The third pump is a guest – *Hook Norton Hookey* was being served when visited recently.

The *Kings Head* serves *Fullers London Pride* and *Sharp's Doom Bar* plus one off *Punch's* Finest Cask List, such as *Brakspear Bitter*. Free WiFi available.

The *Red Lion* is still closed – future uncertain.

The *Rising Sun* continues to concentrate on Locales but also offers other intriguing beers from around the country straight from the barrel at £2.85 a pint. *Vale Gravitat*, *Best Bitter*, *VPA* and monthly specials; *XT* 2, 3, 5, 6 etc; *Rebellion IPA*, *Roasted Nuts* etc. with *Tring Brookmans* coming shortly. There's always a guest cider on draught.

The *Rose & Thistle* is serving *Greene King IPA* and *Hardys & Hansons*

*Olde Trip* and *Ale Fresco*. Get texted or tweeted by Spaz as to 'What's happening at the RAT'. Listen to or join in with Haddenham Shamrocks 2nd and 4th Tuesdays.

## KINGSWOOD

Extensively rebuilt, the former *Crooked Billet*, now the *Cook & Fillet* provides an extensive menu and two local real ales from a lavish interior. The large back room has been turned into a delicatessen and local shop, providing produce from local farms.

## LITTLEWORTH COMMON

The *Blackwood Arms* will be holding a beer festival from Friday 19th to Tuesday 23rd of April. Twenty ales and ciders, morris dancing and a barbecue (weather permitting).

## LONG CRENDON

The *Churchill Arms* keeps *Fullers London Pride*, *Sharp's Doom Bar* and *XT4* or *XT6* on pretty much permanently. An additional guest might be another *XT* or *Oxfordshire Ales Churchill IPA*.

The *Eight Bells* has its own *Hells Bells*, and *XT4* on permanently plus a wide range of other beers such as *Tring Brookmans*, *Wychwood Skinflint* and *Skinner's Betty Stoggs*.

## MARLOW

*Baroosh* has been opened by *McMullens Brewery* in the site of the former Lloyds Bank building on the High Street.

## MARSWORTH

The *Anglers Retreat* will be holding their Spring Beer Festival from

Wednesday 20th through until Sunday 24th of March when there will be 14 festival ales and three ciders on offer.

## PRINCES RISBOROUGH

Pat Cooper is the new landlady at the *Bird in Hand*, after she took over in mid December (just before Christmas). Their regular beers are: *Greene King IPA* and *Olde Trip*. They're also serving food and the log burning fire is a nice cosy touch at this time of year!

## STEWKLEY

The *Carpenters Arms* landlord Keith Stephenson has retired after more than five years at the pub. Brenda Wallace took over the management in early January bringing much experience from previous work in other local hostelrys. Her enthusiasm should further enhance this popular village local. Three ales are always on offer, currently *Fullers London Pride*, *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*. The latter two are guests and will be revised regularly with suggestions welcomed. Both the *Pride* and the *Spitfire* were sampled when visited and were both found to be in fine form. A 'happy hour' at £2.50 a pint for ales and lagers has been introduced on Fridays between 5pm and 6pm. Future events planned include quiz nights to be held monthly on Wednesday evenings from the 30th January. Brenda also plans to carry on with the annual Summer Beer Festival started two years ago by Keith.

The former saloon bar houses the Lissan Indian Restaurant which compliments the pub well and does not intrude with the public bar. A meal is a good way of finishing off an evening in the pub,

alternatively, if you are ordering or picking up a takeaway, you can just nip next door for a quick pint.

## STOKE MANDEVILLE

There is a new landlord in the *Bell*. James Penlington has just about finished refurbishment, and is open for custom. Serving Charles Wells ales and a good range of food, the pub also provides free WiFi.

The *Bull* are currently serving *Adnams Bitter*, *Brains SA*, *Sharps Doom Bar* and *St Austell Tribute*.

## THAME

*Chinnor RFC*, a 15 minute walk from the town centre, serves the club's very own *Vale Falcon* (see separate article on page 4) and *Brakspear Bitter*. Come and support Chinnor who are currently lying high mid-table in National League 2 South. Games are really exciting and of a very high quality.

At the *Cross Keys* there was a new brew from *Thame Brewery* recently called *Miracle on East Street*. It was a winter beer of 4.0 ABV but with added brandy in it. Will there be any more miracles?

## WOOBURN COMMON

The *Royal Standard* will be holding a Bank Holiday beer festival from Friday May 3rd to Monday May 6th. They will also be hosting regular quiz evenings on the second Monday of every month. Cash prizes etc.

## WYCOMBE MARSH

The *Disraeli Arms* has been shut for a couple of months now and its future must be looking a bit grim now.



**Constantine & Louise Lucas welcome you to**

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# THE ALE OF TWO CITIES

## Has Norwich overtaken Sheffield as UK 'City of Ale'?

In terms of the quantity and variety of real ales currently on offer for the discerning drinker, a quote from a former prime minister comes to mind 'we have never had it so good!'. This is thanks to a combination of **CAMRA**'s 42 years of campaigning to promote real ale, the renewed broadening in sophistication of British drinker's palates, and the enterprise of ale brewers from the small microbrewer to large nationally renowned companies. Unsurprisingly, stirrings of civic pride have been noticed amongst **CAMRA** circles, which have led to fierce rivalries developing between several cities as they attempt to be recognised as the best city in the UK to drink real ale. Several cities have attempted to claim the crown such as Bristol, Derby and Nottingham. There is also the up-and-coming real ale star of York that is closing in on the leading pack. However, it is widely acknowledged that there are two cities where the drinkers have it better than the rest of us. Nowhere in the country is the rivalry as intense as that which has developed between Sheffield and Norwich. For many years Sheffield was unrivalled in its claim, however this all changed when Norwich declared itself the 'City of Ale' in 2011.

Since 2011, Norwich has held a ten-day festival in May and June called 'City of Ale'. The festival aims to promote Norwich as the best place in the UK to enjoy real ale. It does so by arranging brewery visits, holding over 190 events, and signing up 45 pubs to serve over 240 beers in what could be described as one giant city-wide beer festival. The event has been hugely successful over the last couple of years.

Last year, both Norwich and Sheffield conducted snapshot surveys of pubs



using willing **CAMRA** volunteers. Their survey involved counting how many different real ales were served in each city on one single evening. Norwich took the honours by finding 259 different real ales in comparison to Sheffield's 257. This may not seem like a huge difference but the Norwich City Branch claim the contrary taking into account that Sheffield is around twice the size of Norwich.

In terms of **Good Beer Guide** pubs, Norwich has a respectable 16 pubs that were deemed worthy of inclusion. This is no mean feat considering that Norwich was declared a beer desert by **CAMRA** in the 1970s and only had one pub worthy of inclusion in the first guide. The city was further devastated by the closure of its three commercial breweries by **Watneys** in 1966. However the city has recovered these losses with interest as it now has six breweries within its confines. In comparison Sheffield has a healthy 13 city centre pubs in the **Good Beer Guide** and a further 14 in its suburbs. This is complemented by eight breweries within the city.

In order to see past the obvious propaganda I decided to put both cities' claims to the test in the best way possible, by spending a weekend in each and visiting all their **Good Beer Guide** pubs to sample the ales.

### Norwich

On the first weekend of December, I set off with much excitement to Norwich with my wife Sandra as my drinking partner. Our aim was to visit all the pubs in the 2013 edition of the **Good Beer Guide**. Friday night started with a visit to the **Trafford Arms**. This large street corner pub just outside of the city centre was a great introduction to the city, as it had a very large selection of ales from across the country. However, as the evening progressed, we visited gem after gem including the **Chalk Hill Brewery** tap (**Alexandra Tavern**), **Grain Brewery** tap (**Plough**) and eventually finished at the nationally famous **Fat Cat**. This pub, twice winner of **CAMRA National Pub of the Year** in 1998 and 2004, offers 30 real ales including six beers from its namesake brewery (see menu board above). Obviously this pub was very popular with the city folk as there was not a spare seat in the house and it resembled a beer festival atmosphere.

Wary that the highlights of Norwich's pubs were behind us, we headed out on Saturday to visit the remaining guide pubs. We again started strongly with a visit to the gruesomely named **Murderer's Arms**. So named due to a famous murder that took place there in 1895. It was here that I sampled the ale with the longest name in history. The landlord made me pronounce the whole name before he agreed to pour it for me (see photo). Unfortunately, after my labours he still required me to pay for the pint.

The day proceeded with visits to the **Norwich Bear** brewery tap (**Kett's Tavern**) which served the tastiest beer of the weekend, along with visits to my two favourite pubs in the city, **White Lion** and **King's Head**. Both pubs had an amazing atmosphere and the friendliest bar staff in the city. It was also a delight, and testament to the status that ale receives in the city, to find that the Thai Restaurant (**Vine**), where we ate that evening, also served three very well kept real ales.

Returning home from Norwich I couldn't help but think that we had already found the rightful owner of the accolade of 'City of Ale', however I reserved my judgement until I had given Sheffield its chance to persuade me otherwise.







*Sheffield*

On the first weekend of January, my wife and myself set off for Sheffield to complete our survey. Friday began with a visit to the **Sheffield Tap** in the main railway station. The beers in this establishment are of such good quality that it would encourage you to arrive early for your train or indeed miss it.

We continued our tour across the southern end of the city including a stop at the **Devonshire Arms** with its exceptional range of ales representing all beer styles. Another highlight was our visit to the **Bath Hotel** with its exquisitely tiled interior transporting you back to a bygone era.

Saturday started with a visit to the famous **Kelham Island Tavern**. This pub (pictured left), twice winner of **CAMRA National Pub of the Year** in 2008 and 2009, was rescued from dereliction in 2002 as the industry surrounding it gradually closed down. Thankfully it has now risen like a phoenix from the ashes to stand out as one of the must visit pubs in the UK.

Just around the corner is the equally iconic **Fat Cat** (pictured below) which has also endured the same threat to its existence to create an ale drinkers paradise in an area of the city that has very little going for it.

Thankfully the rest of the evening continued in the rich vein that it had started with highlights such as the **Wellington**, a pub with an amazing array of ales, and the **Hillsborough Hotel** which serves as the brew pub for **Wood Street Brewery** creating an excellent experience to round of the trip.

### *Which city wins the accolade?*

It is hard to judge which city, in my eyes, should win the accolade of the 'City of Ale'. Both cities were beyond my greatest expectations. However, I do feel that Norwich has possibly surpassed Sheffield in terms of the range of ales that are served but Sheffield still retains the title if it is based purely on the overall experience. I would definitely recommend a visit to both so that you can make up your own mind.

*Carl Griffin*



# THE WHEEL

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## Squeezing *CAMRA* Members into More Confined Space

The last edition of *Swan Supping* posed the fascinating, but potentially uncomfortable question of ‘how many fat-bellied *CAMRA* members can you squash into oddly confined spaces’. The first answer was provided in our account of our *National Cask Ale Week* crawl but readers were kept on tenterhooks for the second. All will be revealed (or squeezed out) below.



At the beginning of November we headed for newly regenerated Stratford in East London. No, we weren't a few months late for the Olympics, although our destination at the far side of the colossal Westfield shopping centre was within a javelin throw of the Olympic Park's now closed gates.

We started our crawl of Stratford and Greenwich at **Tap East**. This is a new brew-pub that has been set up by the people behind the highly-rated **Rake** in Southwark.

Traditional East End boozery it certainly isn't – tall, plate-glass windows, comfy sofas and the sort of funky, minimalist décor that's threatening to make these new-style beer drinking establishments almost fashionable. But there was nothing minimalist about the number of pump clips stuck on the walls behind the bar or the vast selection of foreign bottled beers in the fridges.

In addition to three guest ales, three handpumps served ale brewed on the premises in a plant visible behind a glass partition. These were: *East End Mild* (3.6%), *London Extra* (5.3%) and *Coffee in the Morning* (5.5%). The brewery opened in late October 2011 and has four fermentation vessels and a kettle (of the brewing variety) with a capacity of two barrels.

**Tap East's** beers were highly rated by our party of discerning tasters – including Simon, Dave, Jon, Antony from Reading *CAMRA* and Nick Holt, our branch's ex-secretary and chairman, who's been much missed since his exile in *Adnams'* land in Suffolk. Of course, we must disassociate ourselves from the suggestion that **Tap East's** location is cleverly designed



to appeal to those who have been dragged to Westfield while their better halves indulge in some retail therapy – the beer's good enough therapy in itself for either sex with so much variety to choose from.

But sadly we had to leave to board the DLR to head to the Royal Docks station for one of London's newest – and most novel – transport innovations. It's a construction that would probably have attracted a lot more attention had it not opened immediately before the Olympics – an event it was partly conceived to serve.

Its official name is, in rather ghastly corporate speak, ‘The Emirates Air Line’ after its sponsors. With that connection to Arsenal football team, the editor had to be dragged screaming holding aloft several crucifixes before going anywhere near the place. And no, this wasn't anything connected with aeroplanes. It wasn't directly connected with beer either – except to be the most unusual form of transport imaginable on a pub crawl.

The ‘airline’ is a cable car that crosses the Thames between Docklands (close to the Excel centre) and the Greenwich Peninsula (near the O2 or Millennium Dome). It is magnificent, giving spectacular views of London, and I'd recommend anyone to take a ride – it's not even that expensive, at £3.20 a ride, assuming you've bought a Travelcard to get there.

It's apparently the most expensive cable car system built anywhere in the world – a legacy of the ‘cost is no object’ building frenzy in East London in the run up to the Olympics. The two boarding stations are in the middle of nowhere, which makes the cable car's presence all the more surreal. It's the type of structure that would probably never have been built had it not been for the Olympics and so, to my mind, all the more valuable for that – like many other highlights of last summer, it's frankly a bit bonkers.

And speaking of surreal and bonkers, there were six of us to fit in a tiny-looking cable car gondola – with the majority of us possessing beer-loving stomachs that ought to make it unnecessary for us to have to carry our *CAMRA* membership cards.

We queued for around ten minutes, wondering if the staff would dare load us all into the same car. Not only did they do so but also they also shoehorned two normal sized women into our party. I'm not sure they expected their trip to be accompanied by our **Tap East** lubricated banter but they were good sports.

It's a short ride, about five minutes, and not easy for those who fear heights, although I suspect our gondola hung significantly lower on the cable than the others. The car climbs steeply and reaches a height of nearly 300 feet when it crosses the Thames. As well as Canary Wharf, the O2, the Thames





Flood Barrier and the Olympic Park, the cable car gives spectacular views of the rest of London — including the unusual perspective of the City from the East.

After the spectacular river crossing it was time to resume the main business of the day and, fortunately, there was a **Fuller's** pub – the **Pilot Inn** – within walking distance in North Greenwich. This area is still something of a post-industrial wasteland. The route to the pub was dominated by large tracts of open land, building sites and junkyards – so it was a relief to find the **Pilot Inn** was a busy, welcoming local with decent ales – and also contained a patiently waiting Noj. I had an *ESB* to top myself up after the lack of in-cable-car beery refreshment.

From the **Pilot Inn**, we headed into Greenwich proper – negotiating some rather pedestrian unfriendly roundabouts that passed under the road to the Blackwall Tunnel. Heading for the **Pelton Arms**, we happened to pass the site of the **Meantime Brewery**, in the rather un-maritime setting of a dreary industrial estate (as, sadly, are most breweries these days).

Backstreet boozier, the **Pelton Arms** has an alternative name featured on its sign – the **Nag's Head**. According to the *Good Beer Guide*, this was the name given to the pub when it featured in an Only Fools and Horses prequel, as a pub frequented by the young Rodney Trotter (fictional brother of our own local resident David Jason). It is a large freehouse with an interesting selection of beers – some Hallowe'en themed on our visit – including *Mordue Old Hallows Ale*. Food and live music are also mainstays of the pub.

We meandered round more residential streets on our way to the **Plume of Feathers**, another *Good Beer Guide* recommendation. It's a cosy, welcoming, unpretentious pub offering *Harveys*, *Sharps Doom Bar* and, on our visit, *W.J. King's Horsham Best*.



The **Plume of Feathers** is close to Greenwich Park so we, rather unadvisedly in retrospect, took a longer than expected walk through the park in the dark on our way to the historic centre. Unfortunately, much of the park was still cordoned off as work to remove the temporary Olympic equestrianism venue was still underway. Still, we managed to see the views of Canary Wharf that provided the backdrop to the Games' TV coverage – which were just as stunning at night. We also passed close to the Royal Observatory, spotted due to the laser beam it was projecting into the sky.

The centre of Greenwich was heaving with lithe, glamorous young party animals. But enough about us – the place was packed with many other people out to have a good time. Even at half-past six there was nowhere for us to sit and rest our weary legs in our next port of call – the **Gipsy Moth** – right next to the spectacular and newly-restored Cutty Sark. There was a good selection of ale – and the staff encouraged tasting too – but the touristy location was reflected in the prices – £4 for a 3.9% *Itchen Valley Junga*.

But £4 was a bargain compared to our next stop, a deviation off the original route as one of our number particularly wanted to visit the place. However, he may have changed his mind when charged £4.40 a pint. It was **Meantime's Old Brewery**, situated in the Old Royal Naval College. The old brewery itself, by far the largest space in the venue (I hesitate to call it a pub), was off limits to us because we had not chosen to dine there – and the food prices were commensurate with the beer.

As with their marketing campaigns and packaging, one sometimes gets the impression that **Meantime** consider the average British **CAMRA** drinker somehow not quite good enough for their products. The brewery is lionised by beer writers who tend to queue up to praise the quality and innovation of their many beers, despite most (if not all) only being available on draft in keg form.

The bar was so crammed that we sat outside in the beer garden – which had a nice view of the river at least – and the *London Stout* was a decent pint, although at that price it should have been.

But Greenwich was at the opposite side of London to our trains back from Marylebone. Simon and Antony continued the unconventional transport theme by taking a riverbus back from Greenwich to central London, which they said was an excellent way to round off the day, especially as there was a bar on board.

Inipped back to Docklands from Cutty Sark station on the DLR and headed for the Jubilee Line. In its own way, Sir Norman Foster's Canary Wharf tube station is as impressive as the cable car. Its cathedral like spaces left me pondering some other **CAMRA** member squeezing feats. For instance, could all the 140,000 members (and still rising) be squeezed inside that cavernous underground hall?

It could be well worth a try as the place would certainly make a most spectacular beer festival venue.

Charlie Mackle







**CAMRA's** Mass Parliamentary Lobby took place on Wednesday, December 12th from 11am. This lobby, organised by Jackie Parker, the former Regional Organiser for the Southern Region of **CAMRA** and now on the National Executive, was the biggest campaigning event in its 40 year history! Over 1,200 **CAMRA** members (as well as other members of the beer and pub industry) descended upon Parliament, calling for an end to the damaging beer duty escalator.

Members travelled from across the UK to speak to their MP as new figures showed that since the beer duty escalator, a policy causing duty on beer to automatically increase by 2% above inflation every year, was introduced in 2008, the number of regular pub goers in the UK has declined by a staggering 3 million people. During this period, over 5,800 pubs have been forced to close their doors.

Since 2008, tax on beer has increased by more than 40%, with over a third of every pint pulled in a pub now paid in duty and VAT. The nation's beer drinkers have to endure one of the highest rates of tax on their pint in Europe, and a 106,000 signature Government e-petition had already forced a Parliamentary debate on the issue, calling on the escalator to be scrapped.

Around 400 MPs were lobbied throughout the day, and Colin Valentine, **CAMRA** National Chairman, said: 'Over the past 40 years there have been few threats to the UK pub industry as severe as the beer duty escalator, which is why so many of our members from across the country travelled to Westminster to participate in the lobby.

'Even after a Government e-petition reaching 100,000 signatures, and a Parliamentary debate where MPs present unanimously backed a review of the beer duty escalator, the Government do not appear to have woken up to



the crippling social and economic impact their actions are having on valued community pubs.

'With the nation's pub closure rate back on the increase, what the Government should be doing is looking at ways to alleviate the burden on struggling pubs, and further recognise their importance as community assets. Such a huge decline in the number of regular pub goers, as seen with today's figures, is a critical reminder that change needs to happen fast to prevent irreparable damage to community life in the UK, and to save the nation's proud pub going heritage from being taxed into oblivion.'

**CAMRA's** lobby of Parliament was a day we had been looking forward to since the idea had first been mentioned almost six months previously.

**CAMRA** has an amazing Public Affairs department who all work really hard to engage with our politicians. The prelude to the Lobby Day was the successful Save Your Pint campaign that raised 107,052 signatures and enabled a backbench debate to take place. This is where **CAMRA's** Public Affairs department really help, as they have helped brief the substantial number of MPs that support **CAMRA's** aims to ensure the issues are raised.



## FRESH NEW LOOK, SAME GREAT TASTE!



**CHEERS AND ENJOY!**



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So what happened? The central lobby (pictured above when empty) in Parliament, is not a large room, and there were over 1200 members coming on the day, so we had been recommended, where possible to book appointments to see our respective MPs. Those who couldn't, or didn't were organised into shifts to try and speak to their MPs. This involved filling in a 'green card' at the lobby reception, which would then be sent to the MP's office. When received, the MP will then attend their constituent. As your MP may not be in parliament, if you just pop in, it is generally best to book an appointment.

One of our MPs, David Lidington, was unavailable on the day of the lobby, so we had arranged to meet with one of his assistants. The lobby was very busy, full of **CAMRA** members, but we eventually managed to get a call sent up to the correct office, and met with the assistant. He listened attentively and made notes as we put our point across, so that he could brief Mr Lidington later that day.

After that, we returned to our muster point, the nearby Emmanuel Centre (pictured at the top of the page) for some speeches by supportive MPs, and some free pints. Pictured right is one of those speakers, Greg Mulholland. He is Lib Dem MP for Leeds North West and chairman of the All Party





Parliamentary Save the Pub Group, who said that the day had been very powerful but that we also need to carry on at a local level to get the message across.

The picture above showing a presentation outside No.10 Downing Street shows (from the left) National **CAMRA** chairman, Colin Valentine, and national directors, Brett Laniosh, Jackie Parker and Bob Stukins, delivering a letter calling for an end to the duty escalator.

The following day, Mr Lidington forwarded us a letter that he had sent outlining our points to the treasury. Sadly the reply was not helpful. It appeared that the government are stuck with the current financial plan and are blind to the evidence that raising the duty is not increasing the revenue.

However, with any campaign, it is all about the war, not the battle, so though there seems not to have been much success in the battle against the beer tax, we have now received a statement from the government that they will now look seriously into the relationship between pub companies and the lessees. The starting position of 'a tied licensee should be no worse off than a free-of-tie licensee' is extremely encouraging. With your help, we will continue to campaign for Real Ale and Your Pub.

It was really good to get involved with one of the core campaigns, and to meet so many other like-minded members. This will continue at the **CAMRA** AGM and Members Weekend (this year in Norwich, 19th-21st April). While there are a large number of passionate members there, the weekend is more about **CAMRA**'s direction than active campaigning and we look forward to more events of this type in the future.



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## AMSTERDAM BEER



This exclusive report of beer in Amsterdam is based upon two visits my friend and I made in 2012 – the first trip was via the Eurostar in May and the second in September from Harwich i.e. on a boat! The second trip was necessary as we couldn't cover everything in three nights or so such was the beer scene there. The boat trip from Harwich international was pretty good, overnight in a clean ensuite cabin with numerous bars and restaurants to keep one happy. I had a bottle of red to myself after the meal (the boat was very empty on this crossing) which was rather silly of me as the alarm to get up and have breakfast, and then get the hell off the boat was when I was in deep sleep mode – oh that was hell! Breakfast was good but I was rough that day.

Amsterdam pubs are still dominated by Belgian beer but **Arendsneest** on Herengracht is a specialist Dutch beer bar which opened in 2000 and is *the* place to go for Dutch beers on tap or bottled, and now there is a proliferation of microbreweries. You don't have to drink any Belgian beer there anymore. The beer bars I mention are not mentioned in any chronological order.

Some of you may well know the **Brouwerij 't IJ** brewery (pictured above) which opened in 1985. Well it's still there and still very good – in fact we went there in each of our trips. It's a two-mile walk from the railway station but it's well served by the tram routes which only take a few minutes – look out for the Windmill. I like this brewery because you buy your beer when you want with no desperate flagging down of a hassled waitress. It also has a variety of snacks such as cheese cubes, meats and pickled eggs. The beer range is excellent with about seven beers at 2.30 Euros each – amongst these are *Plzen*, *Zatte*, *Natte* and *Columbus* – I was drinking these beers in the 90s. A true model of consistency from an 18 year old brewery.

On the edge of Red Light district (well, isn't everything?) is the **Bekeerde Suster** brewery – one of four pubs which are part of the **Beiaard** group; of these, two are found in Amsterdam - the other pub is found a little further south of the centre. The name means 'Reformed Sister' and relates to a prostitute in the Middle Ages who saw the error of her ways and joined a convent – rather fitting for the area I think. This site was also the home of the Maxamiliaan brew pub which I visited in the nineties, sadly closed in 2002. The brewery which started in 2004 is plainly visible at the back of the pub and was actually brewing during our September visit – oh the smell! They do a '*Blonde Ros*', '*Witte Ros*' and a tripel '*Manke Monnik*' – the latter was more heavyweight and more to my taste than those summery *Ros* beers. The other pub, '**De Beiaard**' on Spui is close by – It's by a mass of tramlines so getting here is easy. It features the standard Belgium beer list with Trappists and Abbey beers as well as the odd beer brewed from its sister brewery.

**Bier Fabrik** is a brew pub with an Italian connection found on Rokin which is the southern extension of the Damrak street from the train station. This is rather a large place clearly catering for large crowds. The brewery bit is at the end brewing a portfolio of three beers – the *Rosso ale*, *Nero Porter* (both top fermented) and the '*Alfa*'. The pub was pretty empty during our two visits so we got good service, Monkey nuts are the standard accompaniment to each round of drinks – sweep them onto the floor as the nut oils do the wooden floor a favour (I did ask the waitress about this). The beers were ok but they didn't make me want to spend the whole afternoon there.

Our final brewery, **de Prael** is located some 500 metres to the east of the railway station close to one of the canals. The seating area is gained by ascending a small flight of steps, the latrines are below and the bar is to the right. This is a strange mixture of long wooden seating, wood chairs and comfy sofas. The beer range is very good and the names are based upon 70s Dutch crooners – the LPs on the wall show you how they are – and yes you can even see them performing on YouTube clips! *Heintje*, *Johnny* and *Corry* are some of the beer names. Close to **de Prael** on Nieuwebrugsteeg is the **Old Nickel** which is somewhat reminiscent of an English pub; although the beer list is not long, there is enough Dutch bottled beer to keep one happy.



Other than the breweries there were some good bars: mentions must be made of **Beer Temple**, west of the centre which opened in 2009 and is a shrine to American beer – this long, narrow pub has blackboards on the left and right showing their draft and bottled beer ranges – and you can buy a t-shirt as well; **In De Wildeman**, with its large international beers list and range of draft beers – Dutch beers get a good look in too, perhaps the best Dutch range after **Arendsneest**; **Cafe Golleem** to the south of the centre - careful of the opening times as these peripheral pubs are usually closed mid to late afternoon. This has a really good range of Belgian and Dutch beers; **De Gekraakte Ketel** is a specialist beer shop close by and I managed to get my hands on the elusive *Westvleteren* Trappist beers. I think I paid 25 Euros for four bottles. Ouch. When should I drink them if they the best beers in the world?!?!; **Cafe De Spuyt** near the Leidseplein has an excellent list (see below) and don't miss the specialist Whisky bar (not related to the bar mind you) about three doors up!; **De Zotte**, which was shut late afternoon, so we came back in the evening and it was heaving – so we waited for our next trip to go early evening when it was neither closed or packed! A good Belgian beer list – in fact they have beer menu in the form of a book.

Our boat trip back on visit number two in September was a little sober – I had a large glass of red this time and not a bottle. I also got up 30 minutes before the alarm which was at 05.30 (!). The boat was a LOT BUSIER on the way back and the breakfast queues were enormous – I waited no more than five minutes whereas my friend who got up after the alarm gave up altogether!

All in all, Amsterdam is pretty good now for beer with its four central breweries and decent range of interesting bars all doing Dutch beer amongst the internationals – it doesn't have to be Belgian-centric any more. As well as the Red Light district and the '*Coffee*' bars it can now open its arms to the beer tourists. Bless.

*Lemon Snail*







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## LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

*Chiltern Brewery*

A popular celebration of historic beer styles of porters, stouts and old ales continues at the **Farmers' Bar**, the brewery tap in the **Kings Head**, Market Square Aylesbury. Each beer is handpicked and the idea is to represent some of the best types of these lovely beers currently being brewed in the country. This should also include a world first! Check their website [www.chilternbrewery.co.uk](http://www.chilternbrewery.co.uk) for the latest information.

The Chiltern Brewery's first limited edition beer of 2013 is set for launch on Friday 1st of February. *Chiltern Black* (3.9% ABV) is a dark and

delicious deeply robust porter which starts the brewery's much heralded 'perfect palette of pints for 2013'. It is an ideal brew for these cold winter days and nights with golden treacle tones, hints of roast barley and beautifully hopped. The rich smooth flavours linger and warm the spirits through and through. You can buy it at the brewery shop in Terrick (01296 613647) or the **Kings Head**.

More exciting news. At the beginning of March the brewery will welcome acclaimed beer writer Jeff Evans to officially launch another limited

edition beer, the vintage oak-aged bottled *Bodger's Reserve* (8.9% ABV). Jeff describes it as a 'complex delightful beer – a dark golden ale with abundant aromas of strawberry and creamy oak'. Only 500 bottles of this fantastic bottled beer will be available, so don't miss out.

*Tring Brewery*

*Tring Brewery* started 2013 on a high note after another successful year of trading and the busiest December in the brewery's twenty year history. For 2013 the brewery have once more committed themselves to brewing all their monthly specials using a single UK hop variety. These include a mixture of traditional varieties alongside at least six new and experimental types.

Late last year the brewery launched a prototype beer under the working name *Star Spangled*. After some tweaks to the colour and hopping levels the beer, now called *Moongazer* is now a permanent addition to the brewery's line-up of core beers.

'The demand for a hoppiest beer within our range is something we have not been able to ignore and was indeed something we have always wanted to introduce', commented Ben Marston, 'however we were keen to avoid producing a ubiquitous hugely bitter, grapefruit and citrus flavoured pale golden ale. The aim of *Moongazer* was to produce a beer with a rich colour profile that also drew from the characteristics of the American hop, citra. More importantly the beer was crafted to be less challenging than some of the bolder US hopped styles. There is no doubt, based on the very rapid sales of the beer that we have hit the mark straight off.'

In addition to *Moongazer* 4.3% the brewery are looking to produce higher volumes of *Tea Kettle Stout*. This 4.7% beauty is exceptionally smooth drinking in part down to the fact that the brewery have managed to avoid picking up the acrid, bitter characteristics that can sometimes be found in stouts that have been heavily malted with dark roasted malts.



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*Stan Webb's CHICKEN SHACK - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May - £15.adv*

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## LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

### Aylesbury Brewhouse

The *ABC* Roger Protz collaboration *Sink or Swim* 7.0% 152-day matured India Pale Ale has been exceptionally well received and is nearly sold out. There is a limited quantity available at the shop or at *Vale Brewery*.



Brewing of limited edition beers on the eight barrel plant continues, with David Renton and new Assistant Brewer Hayden Overton in control.

Beers coming over the next couple of months are: *Smart Big Fish*, a 4.3% hoppy amber

beer. This monster was unleashed into the vicinity in late January. It features juicy malt and hops with a bite that will tear you to pieces. Are you man enough to take on the *Smart Big Fish*?



Then the next in the lower

strength series will be *Hop Bine*, a 3.7% copper coloured hoppy bitter.



Following on is *Whip Hand*, a pale 4.2% bitter featuring New Zealand and American hops. Then they have *Tin Roof Rusted* a 4.4% red ale.

Brewery tours are now a regular event. Individuals can make contact to sign up for tours taking place on the first Tuesday of each month. Group tours, a minimum of ten individuals, can be arranged at a mutually convenient time. See the website for more details.

### Malt, The Brewery

The brewery had a very successful Christmas and new year period, including a visit from local MP Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan who commented: 'I was delighted to meet this enterprising couple and have a look round this great small business, which is an example of what can be achieved in uncertain economic times. It is also good to have a local beer, brewed in the heart of the Chilterns and following what I consider are the old traditions.'

Following this 'soft launch' period, the brewery will have an official opening towards the end of March. Please see the brewery website for details: <http://www.maltthebrewery.co.uk/>

### Vale Brewery

December and even January have proved very buoyant and the snow falls arrived just as *King of Snow* reached the bars. There may be some of this 3.9% golden bitter still around, it is worth searching out.

The New Year bought a new arrival as Hayden Overton joined as assistant brewer. Hayden is a real ale enthusiast who arrived equipped with experience from *White Horse Brewery*.

In December the freehold on the *Castle Inn* in Tring was acquired. Stuart and Dora

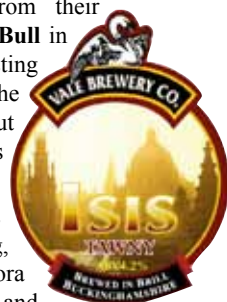
Brierley, who we know from their many successful years at the *Bull* in Stoke Mandeville, are the existing tenants and will continue the smooth running of the pub, but with the addition of *Vale* beers that have been selling well.

*Vale* partner Phil Stevens commented 'The *Castle*, Tring, is a terrific pub. Stuart and Dora are experienced operators and aside from the addition of *Vale* beers, will continue to run their pub as previously.'

The February monthly special is *Isis*, a good old-fashioned traditional English ale of 4.2% brewed using Goldings and Pilgrim hops with Crystal malt, creating a warming flavour.

Then in March they have *Conspiracy*: 'Beware the Ides of March'. This is said to be a 4.1% strength mahogany bitter, with a lean and hungry look. A beer with a conspiracy of malt and hops that is ready to stick the knife in.

*Vale Beer Club* goes from strength to strength. Existing membership benefits continue, including discounts on purchases and access to member's events. Gold membership, now available, offers an exclusive Polo shirt, an engraved *Vale Brewery* beer mug and access to a program of events throughout the year. For details see [www.valebrewery.co.uk](http://www.valebrewery.co.uk).



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## GRAVEDIGGERS - PART TWENTY ONE



outside the pub. Celebrities soon flocked to *Yorick's* for the authentic country experience. Old Pete and Old Joe manned the stall, offering 'genuine' country produce – it made all the difference if the bags of carrots and potatoes they'd bought at Tesco's had been given a rub in the authentically filthy detritus of the **Gravediggers'** gents floor.

'That'll be twenty-five pounds for those there couple of parsnips,' Old Joe said to the glamorous woman in the fur coat with the ginormous gold-encrusted handbag.

'And you warrant they're genuinely biometrically harvested?' she asked.

'Those parsnips have been places you London types couldn't imagine how to certify,' Old Joe said, before adding 'You look just like

James picked up the *Evening Standard* left behind by Sarah Two Jags – the dynamic Head of Human Resources for a major plc in London. She always stopped at the **Gravediggers** when returning home from the station to down a double G&T whenever she'd sacked – oops, right-sized – a decent chunk of her staff. 'A little advance on my bonus,' she used to say, then complain that there weren't any authentic pubs around her company's HQ in Diamond Bob Row, Mayfair.

'She's right about these pubs in London,' James said to Mazz, who was scraping the sludge from the drip trays. 'There's an article here that says they're all being converted into non-taxpaying coffee shops with bijou flats above. Apparently the kiss of death comes when decent boozers get converted into these stripped-pine, minimalist bars and charge £10 a pint for some pseudo-foreign fizz served in an upturned vase.'

'So no-one goes in and the owners can say there's no demand?' Mazz said, surveying the virtually empty bar. 'We've been able to manage that without shelling out on uncomfortable funky furniture and an espresso machine that costs more than the GDP of Sicily.'

'True and we need to diversify too – but things seem to be really bad in London,' James pointed to an article in the paper. 'That pub in Chelsea which was George Best's local is under threat – you'd have thought they'd be set up for years. But at the same time the style pages are full of these trendy celebs opening up new craft microbreweries and shopping for muddy lettuces at farmers markets.'

'They say authenticity is the new bling,' Mazz said.

Old Pete and Old Joe were both slumped over the bar in a *Fit Shaced* induced stupor – clothes dotted in pigswill and birds' nests of hay tangled in their thinning thatches.

'At least those two look authentically smashed,' Mazz said.

'Ten pounds a pint, eh?' James said to Mazz. 'And you used to work in the posh parts of London didn't you?'

\*\*\*\*

Mazz had carefully researched the location for *Yorick's* – bang in the middle of a row of boarded-up theme bars around Bankers' Green in Cashney in the wealthy west of the capital. The **Gravediggers'** London outpost was a temporary 'happening', publicised by word-of-mouth and soon made the websites of the fashionistas. It didn't matter that the abandoned premises had no gas, electricity or running water. That added to the rustic atmosphere – as did the tractor load of decomposing silage that Old Moses had spread over the floor.

To catch the wealthy passing trade, an authentic artisans' market was set up

that actress off that *Swingers'* *Abbey* programme on the telly except I can't say for sure when you've got your clothes on.'

'Oh, you are a wag,' she replied. 'What wonderful artisanal humour. Just like a McGill postcard. Got to eat healthily in my trade!'

Inside *Yorick's*, James and Mazz were doing a roaring trade in the stuff from the bottom of the vats that even the **Gravediggers'** locals wouldn't drink – at £8 a pint or the very popular two for £20 offer.

Radio Four had sent drinks guru Boz Shark to report for the *Foodie Show*. 'We've heard of pop-up restaurants but this might be London's first pop-up pub,' he bellowed into his microphone. 'It gives Bankers' Green a Shoreditch edginess but with a soupçon of rural grunge – an authentic countryside experience in the concrete capital. I'm joined by *Z-Faktor* judge and chart-topping singer, Dafina Pitta, to sample these revolutionary drinks.'

'I'm soo into these cool craft beers – there's even a green one to match my eyes,' Dafina cooed.

James poured a tasting glass of a purple concoction for Boz. He sipped, swirled it round his mouth and pulled a face. 'That is extraordinary. It's like sump oil from a rusty tractor mixed with four-month old potato peelings. How on earth did you get those tastes in a beer?'

James and Mazz exchanged conspiratorial glances, mouthing 'How did he know?' at each other.

Mazz gingerly measured out the green liquid for Dafina to sample. Her cheeks bulged as she swished the beer, she held two thumbs aloft and then swallowed triumphantly.

'I got an unctuous aroma of rotting badger even from three feet away,' Boz said, thrusting his mic under Dafina's nose. 'But how did it taste?'

Dafina's mouth opened but no sound emerged. She held her hands to her throat in panic.

'These beers *do* tend to leave you lost for words,' Boz enthused.

A swarthy man in high-waisted trousers stormed to the bar.

'She's lost her voice, you idiot. That noxious stuff has paralysed her delicate vocal cords – and she's playing the O2 tonight. It's lucky that she mimes the songs but I'm going to have to hire a stand-in to voice her spontaneous introductions. That's several thousands of pounds I'll sue you for.' He picked up his mobile then paused. 'Unless you immediately hand all *Yorick's* stock over to me and grant me worldwide rights to the brand.'

But James and Mazz had already jumped into the muckspreader outside and made a swift retreat as Old Moses' tractor snarled up the Queen's Road.

**Charlie Mackle**



## Branch Diary

*Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!*

### February

#### Saturday 2nd BREWERY VISIT

11.00am, Tring Brewery Visit, then Tring crawl (contact editor to book a place).

#### Tuesday 5th AYLESBURY SOCIAL

8.00pm New Zealand, 9.00pm Hop Pole

#### Tuesday 12th BRANCH SOCIAL

8.30pm White Lion, Cryer's Hill, 9.15pm King's Head, Prestwood.

#### Tuesday 19th GBG PRE-SELECTION MEETING

8.00pm, Bird in Hand, Princes Risborough

#### Thursday 21st EVENING SOCIAL

8.30pm White Swan, Whitechurch, 9.15pm Unicorn, Cublington, 9.45pm Royal Oak, Aston Abbots

#### Monday 25th BRANCH AGM

8.00pm, Kings Head, Aylesbury, bottle raffle, etc.

All local **CAMRA** members are welcome and they should do their best to attend as it is the main opportunity to set the agenda for the branch over the coming twelve months. The Kings Head is close to both the railway and bus stations so it is easy to get to without risking your licence!

We are planning to have a small buffet, so please help by bringing bottles to be raffled off to pay for the venue and food.

#### Thursday 28th GBG SELECTION MEETING

8.00pm, Whip, Lacey Green.

### March

#### Wednesday 6th STOKE MANDEVILLE SOCIAL

8.00pm Bell; 9.00pm Bull.

#### Monday 11th HIGH WYCOMBE EARLY EVENING SOCIAL

6.30pm Belle Vue, 7.30pm Bootleggers, 8.30pm Hobgoblin.

#### Thursday 21st CHINNOR SOCIAL

8.00pm Black Boy, 8.45pm Crown, 9.30pm Red Lion

#### Friday 29th GOOD FRIDAY BEER FESTIVAL SOCIAL

1.00pm Hop Pole, Aylesbury

### April

#### Monday 1st CAMBRIDGE TRIP

Proposed trip in honour of our editor (and ex-chairman, ex-secretary, ex-treasurer etc.)'s, ahem, birthday as he hurtles towards his dotage. Further details will appear on the website as soon as they are known.

Further details can be found on our website

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

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

[www.swansupping.org.uk/joinin](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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Tel : 01296 484551

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Copy deadline for next issue, due out 28th March, is 12th March 2013.

**Subscriptions :-** *Swan Supping* is distributed to over 250 pubs and many other locations in our area but if you would prefer to receive your copy by post we can mail it to you immediately it is published. All you have to do is send £1.50 for each edition you wish to receive to the Editor at the address above and leave the rest to us! This applies to single copies to UK addresses only.

We can mail overseas, but the price will vary depending on the country to which it is to be delivered. Remember that most issues of *Swan Supping* can be downloaded from our website ([www.swansupping.org.uk](http://www.swansupping.org.uk)).

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Acceptance of an advertisement in *Swan Supping* by a pub or its availability there does not guarantee **CAMRA** approval.

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