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# Swan Supping



**Issue 75**

**Dec 2009/Jan 2010**

**COVER STORY:**  
**A brand new**  
**Brewery!**  
**See Page 8**



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

**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



Welcome to the 75th issue of *Swan Supping*!

As you can see we have made a few changes to the magazine to make it look more professional and to take full advantage of all the changes we have made with printers and software.

It is our first issue in full colour throughout and the print run has increased again to 6000. Not bad for a local branch of *CAMRA*'s newsletter!

When we started in the spring of 1997, *Swan Supping* was a six page black and white magazine with a print run of 1500. Steady hard work by a lot of our local members has gone to building up the magazine over the last 12

years by either writing or delivering the issues (or both!). They know who they are and we thank them!

However, we always need new blood to keep the magazine going, so if you feel like contributing (even if it is only news about your local), all efforts will be appreciated!

To make sure that all our local *CAMRA* members get to see this new issue, we are posting a copy to all the members in the *Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch* and as we are rapidly approaching 700 members, this is no mean feat! Note: local members who are subscribers to the magazine will have their subscriptions extended by an extra issue!

The main change we have carried out is to replace the front cover advert and an article with a full-page photo (artfully taken by Alex Wright). The honour of being first to be pictured thus goes to Peter Lambert of the *Cross Keys* in Thame. Peter and his wife Trudi have done a remarkable job of turning round a pub that had been written off by virtually everyone. Then to add to the delight of *CAMRA* members following the superb range of real ales, they decide to open a brewery! Has any pub ever been improved by so much in such a short time?

What or who will feature on our next cover. If you have any suggestions, please get in touch (contact details are on page 22).

The branch has also run the 16th *Vale of Aylesbury Beer Festival* over Halloween to raise money for the *Florence Nightingale Hospice Charity*. This was, once again, a great success with more money raised than last year. It looks like we will have to hold another one next year, also at the end of October, so if you fancy getting involved and enjoying some great beer, why not take the plunge and get in touch?

Before I finish, I must say a big thank-you to Gary Ochiltree for creating the caricature of my good self shown above left, and for portraying me as slim as I think I am!

**David Roe**

*Swan Supping Editor & CAMRA A V & W Branch Chairman*

## NATIONAL CAMRA NEWS



In February this year, a team of *CAMRA* directors, HQ staff members and affiliated beer writers took on the might of the Eggheads at BBC Television Centre, unleashing years of pub trivia and knowledge onto the champion quiz brains.

The recording gave the contestants a good chance to promote key campaigning messages, namely in championing the cause of good beer! After the recording, a few of the Egghead brains revealed to the *CAMRA* team their liking for a pint of real ale; one showing a knowledge of the industry even a long-standing beer writer would be proud of!

The program was broadcast on BBC2 at 6pm on Friday 20th November and was hosted by Jeremy Vine. In each show a new team of challengers take on probably the greatest quiz team in Britain.

The team *CAMRA* played was made up of some of the country's top quiz champions, and their line-up included the winner of 'Are You an Egghead?' Barry Simmons, 'Millionaire' winner Judith Keppel, 'Mastermind' winner Chris Hughes, three-time World Quiz champion Kevin Ashman and 'Weakest Link' winner CJ de Mooi.

The prize on offer was a very tasty £8000 and trying to win it for the *CAMRA* team were Sarah Durham, Iain Loe, Tim Hampson, Jeff Evans and Malcolm Harding.

Iain managed to defeat Kevin Ashman on politics (the first time Kevin has lost after 13 wins on the subject) but the other head to head competitions went against the *CAMRA* team despite Sarah battling through to the third tie-break against Chris Hughes on music.

That left just Iain and Jeff to fight it out against four of the Eggheads and the expected result occurred and the *CAMRA* team left without the kitty.

### *National Brewery Centre*

*CAMRA* is delighted to announce their support for the opening of the *National Brewery Centre* in Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, in 2010, after brewer *Molson Coors UK* reversed its decision to close the brewery site.

Last summer, the *Coors Visitor Centre*, formerly the *Bass Museum*, closed its doors due to falling visitor numbers, despite opposition by *CAMRA*, Janet Dean MP, local and county councils, Burton Civic Society and Chamber of Commerce, and the local media.

However, through the work of a Local Action Group, *CAMRA* is pleased that the Brewing Centre will now become a reality, and will retain key elements of the existing facilities to ensure the building's historic aspects remain.

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## FESTIVAL SUCCESS



The end of October saw the 16th *Vale of Aylesbury Beer Festival* which was, once again, held in conjunction with the 'Friends of Florence Nightingale Hospice'. It was a great success, raising over £4,100 for the hospice.

As a change from previous years, we had music on the Saturday night, and Dragon Drop (pictured above) proved to be very popular. They are a three-piece band that play flute, whistle, accordion, guitar and banjo (not all at the same time!) with a mixture of folk dance tunes from England, Ireland and Scotland.

The *Beer of the Festival*, voted for by the people attending the festival, was *St. Austell Bucket of Blood* and this was also the first beer to run out. We are organising a certificate to present to the brewery in the New Year.

Next year's festival will be held on Friday 29th and Saturday 30th of October.



# "A Beer Lover's Paradise"

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HIGH WYCOMBE

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# HAPPY NEW YEAR?

## *At least 5p on a Pint?*

Drinkers face an unhappy New Year in 2010 thanks to the government who have at least two more tax rises on alcohol in the pipeline.

The temporary reduction in VAT to 15% will be reversed on New Year's Day. This will affect all VAT-able goods so expect your Christmas television viewing to be spoiled by even more irritating 'Sale starts at 9am on Boxing Day!' advertisements than usual as the January sales are telescoped into the jag end of December.

Keen followers of this government's extortionate approach to pubs and the brewing industry may remember that alcohol never benefited in the first place from the VAT cut as the Treasury immediately raised beer duty to compensate for the reduction in VAT. This hasn't, of course, stopped the government including alcohol in the 2.5% increase planned for the first of January.

This administration's schizophrenic attitude to the licensed trade has again been shown by the rather pathetic decision to delay the increase in duty by a full six hours. The government's seemingly favourite group of drinkers – those who binge 24 hours a day – will be able to drink themselves stupid right up to six in the morning on New Year's Day at the lower rate of VAT.

Any delay in the onset of the tax is likely to be welcomed by pubs but if there's any evening in the year when pubs don't need help in generating custom it's probably New Year's Eve.

This delay is likely to be welcomed most by Hogmanay revellers north of the border – a remarkable coincidence that the Prime Minister and Chancellor are both Scotsmen isn't it?

With the price of ale at or approaching £3 a pint in most pubs in the area a 2.5% rise in VAT is likely to translate to about 5p on a pint. Alcohol duty is also due to rise in April by another 2% and it's possible that the pre-Budget report will increase that further.

Stuart MacFarlane, the head of mega-brewer **AB InBev UK** (makers of *Budweiser*, *Stella Artois* and *Beck's*) predicted that alcohol prices would rise by 10% next year mainly due to 'government meddling'.

In comments that many **CAMRA** members will endorse he said 'The government's thinking is not joined up. Are we policing underage drinking on the streets enough? No. It should better enforce laws already in place.'

**CAMRA** recently called on members to sign an on-line petition on the 10 Downing Street website to call on the Prime Minister to support responsible drinkers in the face of the neo-prohibitionist hysteria whipped up in the press.

In fact total alcohol consumption in the UK is actually *falling*. According to a report by wine magazine *Decanter*, the **British Beer and Pub Association** used the Treasury's own figures to show that the rate of decrease is the fastest in over 60 years – with overall consumption down 8% in the first half of 2009. Such figures support **CAMRA's** argument that problem drinkers are a small minority and targeted measures would be more effective than penalising the sensible majority.

However, the government's eagerness to raise beer duty suggests that the arguments about restricting consumption by increasing prices across the board makes a very convenient cover for the Treasury. You might think it a very cynical ruse to soak beer drinkers yet again but I couldn't possibly comment.

*Charlie Mackle*



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## Local News

### AYLESBURY

A lot of work is going on at the **Bell** with scaffolding outside and lots of activity inside. The rumour mill is in full flow about who has taken over the pub, but no actual facts seem to be floating around. Perhaps we will know more next issue.

**Brakspear's** only pub in Aylesbury, the **Emperors Lounge**, has reopened. Its new opening hours are 4pm till late every day but there is no news yet as to whether real ale is available.

The restaurant at the **Green Man** seems to be doing well offering good quality fresh home-made English food including breakfasts from 8am. To wash the food down they have **Shepherd Neame Spitfire** and **Greene King IPA**.

The **Hobgoblin** has a price deal every day of the week from 12 noon to 12 midnight where their beers are available for £1.50 a pint and the traditional beers on offer currently are **Marston's Pedigree** and **Wychwood Hobgoblin**.

We have a new pub in Aylesbury! The **Honey Bee** is a brand new pub created by **Marstons** to service Fairford Leys and the surrounding area. Featuring an offer of two main meals for the price of one, they are food oriented, but there is ample space inside for those wishing to drink. Licensee Lynne Taylor says there will be a warm welcome at this family oriented pub, where people can come and relax anytime. Open all day, every day, the **Honey Bee** will be serving

**Marstons Pedigree**, **Brakspear Bitter**, and **Ringwood Fortyniner**.

Richard Prest at the **Hop Pole** wrote to us to thank all who braved the stormy elements to support their winter beer festival. 31 beers in total were available and 8 ciders and perrys, and the first to sell out was **Allendale's Wolf Ale** (5.5%), followed a close second by **Tring Brewery's Death or Glory** (7.2%). Other favourites were **Vale's** monthly special **Hartwell's Barn** (4.1%) and **Beartown's Black Bear Mild** (5%) converting one **Hop Pole** mild sceptic into a true believer! **Millwhite's** ciders especially the **Premium Rum** and **Whisky Cask** varieties both at 7.5% proved popular, and hopefully will become a regular feature at the pub. The next festival will be at Easter (1st-5th April 2010).

The **Kingsbury** has **Wells & Youngs Bombardier** and **Greene King Abbot** alongside a **Kingsbury House Ale** (no clues yet as to what it is or where it is brewed – but we will find out!).

The **Lounge**, which closed a while back, is to reopen as the **Niche**, which is going to be a wine bar and club, so the sight of a real ale dispenser seems unlikely. The **Niche** will have competition from **LJ's** which is a new night time venue which is opening in the old shop site next to Wilkinson's store.

The **Rockwood** now features **Weston's Traditional Scrumpy Cider** alongside **St. Austell Tribute**.

**Stars** (previously the **Grapes**) is to offer **Adnams Bitter** and **Fullers London Pride** from December and food, including Tapas style platters. Upstairs there is a stage for bands and an 'Exclusive VIP Members Lounge' which offers comfy chairs and a relaxed environment to enjoy cocktails and bottled drinks as well as the entertainment which is available every night. They have also opened a Café Shop next to Barclays Bank offering hot and cold food (including snacks) and drinks.

### CUDDINGTON

The **Crown** is doing Boxing Day and New Year's Day 'brunches' and special offers on Fish & Chips on Friday nights at £20 for two inc. two small drinks, and Wednesday nights a Pie & Pudding for £10. **Fullers London Pride** and **Adnams Bitter** feature, with the guest usually another **Fullers** beer such as **Fullers IPA** or their seasonal offering.

The **Crown** was runner-up for the 'Best Village Pub in Aylesbury Vale' in the competition run by AVDC.

### DINTON

The **Seven Stars** closed its doors on the 1st of September but this **Punch** owned pub reopened again immediately with Justin & Sandra now firmly at the helm. Justin, with 25 years in the pub, restaurant and hotel trade behind him, promises to keep **Vale Wychert** or **Best Bitter** available plus **Fullers London Pride** or similar.

Now open seven days a week, the opening hours are 12-3pm, 5.30-11pm Monday to Friday, 12-11pm Saturday and 12-10.30pm on Sunday with good food served daily, including Sunday roasts at £9.95/11.95 - one/two courses

### FLACKWELL HEATH

The **Magpie** flies no more. Any previous rumours surrounding the future reopening of the **Magpie** have now been quashed as it has been bulldozed and the site is up for redevelopment.

### FORD

**Dinton Hermit** landlady Mary O'Hara is doing a TukTuk drive for charity from Nepal to southern India, 2,500 km in 16 days during January 2010. Several theme dinners to raise funds for her charity were successful.

She has **Vale Best** at all times supported by a **Chiltern** beer such as **Beechwood** or **Copper Beech** and B&B is available with 13 rooms from £90 to £130 for four posters. Pub will be closed after Christmas lunch until evening of 4 Jan 2010.

### FORTY GREEN

Matthew O'Keeffe at the **Royal Standard of England** has also acquired the **Harte & Magpies** (previously the **Magpies**) in Coleshill, just outside Amersham. It is planned to have no major brands on sale and feature local brewery beer plus **Cotswold Lager** and **Farm Press** ciders.

# THE WHIP INN

## TRADITIONAL ENGLISH COUNTRY PUB

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## Local News

### GIBRALTAR

The **Bottle and Glass** serves *Greene King IPA* and a *Greene King* guest. Meal deals at lunch times and before 7pm Monday through Saturday - 1 course £7.95; 2 courses £11.95 & 3 courses £13.95 and Sunday roasts at £9.95/11.95 - one/two courses.

### HADDENHAM

The village holds a permanent beer festival with over 12 different real ales on offer all year around in the village's five pubs. Thanks for supporting the Winterfest on 21 November.

*Sharps Doom Bar*, *Bass Premium Ale* and *Adnams Bitter* with guests such as *Vale Wychert* are regularly available at the **Green Dragon**. Enjoy the Christmas menu in front of one of the two open log fires.

The **Kings Head** serves *Adnams Bitter* and *Fullers London Pride* plus one guest which could be *Wadworths 6X* or as found recently an interesting *Titanic Stout*. Two steaks for £11 on Wednesday evenings and try the Poker League every Sunday evening from 8pm.

Mick at the **Red Lion** has his new leg! Permanent fixtures are *Adnams Bitter*, *Tetleys Mild*, *Black Sheep Bitter* plus one rotating guest, recently *Vale Special* and shortly to be *Timothy Taylors Landlord*. Men's (Thursdays) and ladies' (Wednesdays) darts and dominoes, summer and winter. On 19th December Christmas there is the memorial dominoes cup in remembrance of Roy Tipping.

The **Rising Sun** is getting busier under the new management of Katie Lambert and Ray Patrick. Now up to four real ales, two from *Vale* and two ever changing guests. Pool (Tuesday) and darts (Thursday) leagues with a quiz at 8.00pm on Wednesdays speed pool on Thursdays from 8.00pm - win a free drink. Sandwich menu Noon-1.45pm.

At the **Rose & Thistle** the permanent beers are *Olde Trip* and *Greene King IPA* with a guest. Remember it's Quiz Night first Wednesday of the month. Haddenham Rotary welcomes new members every Monday from 7.30pm. Marsh Gibbon brass band for a Carols evening on Friday 11th December. Two steaks and a bottle of wine for £19.95 on Saturday nights and 2 course Sunday lunch for £10.

### HIGH WYCOMBE

Paul Campion, who runs the **Sausage Tree** in Wycombe and the **Birdcage** in Thame, has taken over the **Flint Cottage**. This is being refurbished, including the removal of the pool tables, and will reopen at the start of December as the **Bootlegger** which will feature seven cask ales. There will be over 250 bottled beers available including beer from around the world and a large selection of bottle conditioned ales. Let's hope it lives up to its promise of being 'Beer Lover's Paradise' - a claim we will test in a social early in the New Year.

Nick Hume and his wife are leaving the **Le De Spencer Arms** which is being taken over by one of the regulars, Ian Goulding, and his wife, Sarah. He has an experienced couple in line to run the pub which is currently being renovated (including removing the carpets to make use of the stone floor) and in place by about 27th Dec. Staying open during renovation work.

### KINGSWOOD

The **Plough and Anchor** has re-opened under new owners Mark Smilie and Bernard Lord. Their regular real ales will be *London Pride* and *Brakspears Bitter*. They also have one guest ale on sale that will change weekly, which is currently *Spitfire*. We also have a wine list of approximately 30 good quality wines from various countries with 'Two Fat Men' specials available and changing every week. There also feature a large range of whisky and brandy. Take a look at their website, [www.ploughandanchor.co.uk](http://www.ploughandanchor.co.uk), for further information.

### MARLOW

Since the 12th of November the **Britannia** has new faces behind the bar. Tim Griffiths was previously bar manager at **Marlow Rugby Club** and some of you will remember Gill Serpa from her time at the **Bank of England** pub in Dean Street before it became a *Hungry Horse* and then a block of flats. *Rebellion IPA* is still available here and may be joined soon by a second real ale as trade is picking up.

**Clayton's Lounge**, erstwhile the **Clayton Arms**, is closed currently and there is a 'To Let' sign above the door. Let's hope that a real ale pub re-emerges and not another wine-bar or restaurant.

The **Duke of Cambridge** continues to offer an excellent choice to the discerning drinker with goodies spotted of late from *Tryst*, *Three Castles*, *Saffron*, and Caversham's brand new brewery *Two Bridges* - the first pub on our patch to feature their beers. The **Duke's** very own X-Factor competition is gathering momentum with the semi-final on the evening of Thursday 3rd December and the final a week later.

The choice of real ales at the **Plough** continues apace with recent sightings, and tastings, from breweries as diverse as *Brass Monkey*, *Hadrian & Border*, *George Wright*, and *Highwoods*. Scarcely a week passes without the enthusiastic team arranging a special event such as a Charity Ball, a Caribbean Evening, or a Beer & Pie Festival; the latter was of particular note to us beer (and pie) lovers with a six days festival that commenced on Bonfire Night with a great variety of very tasty pies and ten beers from far and wide complementing the three local beers from *Rebellion's* stable.

### QUAINTON

The **George & Dragon** has been voted as the 'Best Village Pub in Aylesbury Vale' in the AVDC Village Pub Competition.

### STOKE MANDEVILLE

The **Woolpack** has reopened following the disastrous fire earlier this year.

In addition to *Brakspears Bitter* and *Timothy Taylors Landlord*, *Purity UBU* was on sale there when visited.

### THAME

The **Abingdon Arms** ceases to exist, but in its place is the **James Figg**. This is not to be confused with the old **Jimmy Figgs** which was the **Oxford Arms**, **Hobgoblin** et al.

The **James Figg** is being operated by the **Peach Pubs Company** who are also responsible for running the **Thatch** and they are aiming to restore the good name of James Figg (a boxer) to the revamped Abo.

Frazer and Tony, currently based at the **Thatch** will be running operations and they will open for business 9.00 p.m. on Thursday 3rd December and opening hours from 4th December will be 10.00a.m. to midnight.

Beers on sale will be *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, *Charles Wells Bombardier*, *Purity UBU* at 4.5% and one other from either *Vale* or *Chiltern*. Pub food will be available 12 - 2.30 and 6.00 to 9.30.

The **Cross Keys** has recently installed and opened a micro brewery. The landlord and brewer, Peter, is now having to work hard to keep up with demand! *Mrs Tipples Ghost*, available at the opening, was the first beer to sell out

at the recently held **Haddenham Winter Fest** despite being in a 10 gallon tub as opposed to the normal 9 gallon one. He is now busy brewing for the winter.

Meanwhile, Trudi keeps on smiling behind the bar serving the ever changing selection of beers.

Just down the road, the **Falcon** continues to sell two **Hook Norton** beers and a guest at any one time. On the last visit, they had *Hooky Best* 3.6%, *Hooky Steaming On* at 4.4% and *Brains Reverend James* at 4.5%.

In the **Swan** they recently had four ales on offer, but none from small breweries. There was *Spitfire*, *Adnams Best*, *Black Sheep Best Bitter* and *London Pride*.

The **Thatch** continues to sell two *Vale* beers, *Wychert* and a seasonal. Both still too cold and pulled through a sparkler, which will be removed if asked.

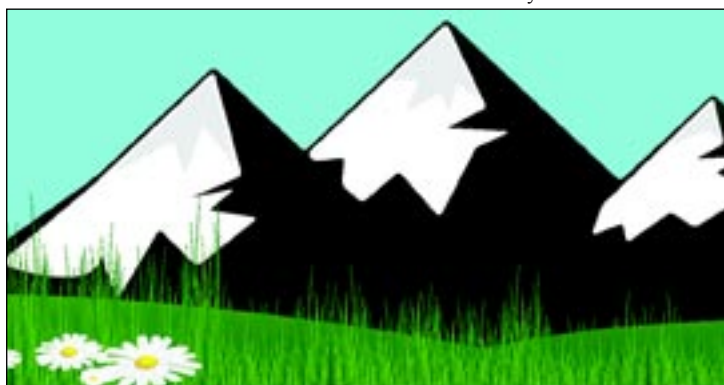
### WING

The **Queens Head** has been voted 'Best Food Pub' in the AVDC Village Pub Competition.

### WOOBURN GREEN

The **Queen and Albert**, known locally as the **Steps**, has a new landlord in Carl Quarterman, who was previously at the **Britannia** in Marlow.

We shall have to arrange a social there in the New Year to welcome him to Woburn and try his beers.



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## A BRAND NEW BREWERY



We'd like to say that **CAMRA's** campaigning enabled the opening of our branch's sixth (and smallest) brewery, but ultimately it has been the hard work of landlords Peter and Trudi Lambert, whose vision for a pub that had been in decline, has created one of the biggest turnarounds in recent times.

The **Cross Keys**, Thame, had been the abode of pool tables, keg lager, loud music, and no small amount of trouble. It had been closed a year ago, declared 'financially un-viable' by its owners, and put on the market. Then, Thame based **Oak Taverns** considered buying the pub, and asked Peter and Trudi to spend a month assessing its potential. Having previously made their mark by reviving an **Oak Taverns** pub in west London, the couple arrived in Thame in February, trebled the **Cross Keys'** turnover within a month and, having trebled it again, decided to stay.

Peter explained the formula that has enabled the **Cross Keys** to thrive at a time when 50 pubs per week are closing around the country. 'There were two real ales here when we arrived, along with a well-known keg beer,' he said. 'The first thing I did was disconnect the keg and remove the pool

table, and within a couple of months we had installed five real ale pumps. Then we added a sixth pump for our house ale, the **Best Bitter** from **Vale Brewery** in Brill.'

Selecting local brewery **Vale**, Peter provided the pub with a selection of beers that has appealed to local residents, drawing them in in great numbers.

'During the nine months since we have been here, we have gone through 350 different guest ales, all of them from micro-breweries. I have never sold so much mild in my life, and we are also regularly offering porter and stout on draught.

'Word has been going around the town and the community has become involved – it is a place where women also feel comfortable, where there is no background music and no fruit machines, and the only sound you hear is the sound of conversation.

Still not totally satisfied with this successful transformation, Peter decided to make use of abandoned brewery equipment from another **Oak Taverns** pub in Dorset. When he collected it, it was in a dreadful state. It had been left outside with a tarpaulin



# CHRISTMAS BEER!



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## THAME BREWERY

thrown over the top, and water had pooled inside the vessels. Many patient hours of scrubbing and sterilising were needed before the equipment could be put to use.

Peter was then faced with another problem. Though he had the component parts, he had no idea how to put all the parts together.

'Having never brewed beer before, I have been learning fast,' he reflected. 'Installing the equipment was a serious challenge, and I have never done so much plumbing in my life.'

He credits 'The Microbrewers' Handbook' (ISBN-13: 978-0956268105) in providing invaluable information on getting him started. The Internet also provided helpful information and recipes.

The official opening of the brewery took place on Saturday 14th November, and members of the local **CAMRA** branch were lucky enough to be present as local MP, John Howell, served the first pint to Radio 2 personality and local resident Ken Bruce.

DJ Ken Bruce, who lives nearby, is a keen supporter of the pub, and the **Cross Keys** Christmas raffle, launched on the day, will this year be in support of Ken's charity (with a polypin of beer amongst the prizes).

The launch brew is a medium-strength bitter called *Mrs Tipple's Ghost*, named after a former landlady who ran the pub in the 1950s and whose picture still hangs by the bar. The beer is aptly named, as current landlords Peter and Trudi Lambert have restored the pub to the levels of popularity that Daisy Tipple herself would have been proud of!

An additional 3.8% brew, called *Olly's Return*, named after a customer who has just returned after a major operation, was also enjoyed.

In addition to the special guests, the pub was packed with residents from Thame and further afield. Let's hope they all enjoyed themselves and will give the pub the support it deserves in the future.

Alexander Wright

## HADDENHAM WINTERFEST



The third Winterfest took place on 21st November at the lovely old tithe barn at Manor Farm, by very kind permission of Tom Bucknell and his family. The weather by recent standards was reasonably kind, and attendance was slightly increased on last year. The committee's completely redesigned layout meant that everyone could eat, drink, shelter, shop and be entertained in comfort.

Thirty two ales were presented in excellent drinking condition by our kellermeister, Pete Summerskill, ranging from the mighty *Baltic Trader* (**Greenjack Brewery**) at 10.5% to *Mrs Tipples Ghost* (4.2%), recently started brewing in Thame. All of the ales

went down well, including our neighbour **Vale Brewery's** interesting trio, *Hartwell's Barn* (4.1%), *Piltdown* (4.1%) and *Something Wicked* (4.8%). We did not run out of beer!

With a selection of ciders, mulled wine, a barbecue and hot pies there was something for everyone, and although we are still counting for the final figure, there will be good donations to Florence Nightingale Hospice, and to local good causes.

The committee as always, is greatly indebted to the many helpers who give their time and skills to make Winterfest possible. Too many to mention individually, but you know who you are, and we are very grateful.

See you all at the Summer Real Ale Festival at the Community Centre, Haddenham, on Saturday 3rd July. Watch [www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk](http://www.haddenham-beer-festival.co.uk) for details in due course.

Doug Harrison

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## RESTOBIÈRES - L' AMOUR DE LA BIÈRE



At the end of July this year, I stayed overnight in Brussels on my way back from Poland and Germany. The hotel had little to recommend it other than that its proximity to Midi station. An arthritic lift with bare contacts where one of the floor buttons should have been (thankfully not for my, or the ground, floor) took me, via dingy corridors and an unexpected flight of stairs to the very top floor of the narrow building. My basic room was clean and surprisingly comfortable (well, put it this way, I slept soundly that night after my evening out...) – but the tiny, all-in-one moulded plastic toilet and shower ‘pod’ was a time-capsule that even *Dr Who* might balk at entering. The wide-open sash-window with a disconcertingly low sill, looked straight down, from a dizzying height, to the cobbles of the *Place Du Jeu de Balle* – I thought of my planned late evening, and perhaps slightly unsteady return, so closed it fast.

I was hungry, but for an aperitif, the **Brocante** was just a few yards away and it certainly lived up to its description in the *Good Beer*

*Guide of Belgium* by Tim Webb (6<sup>th</sup> ed, 2009) as a ‘full-on, smoky, Marollais boozer’. A **Bosteels Tripel Karmeliet** (8.4%) made for an excellent starter, but I didn’t stay long, as just a few minutes away was the place where I wanted to spend the evening, to unwind after my rail journey from Berlin – **Restobières**: described as ‘possibly the finest ‘restaurant with beer’ in the Guide. Alain Fayt’s eclectic tastes and flair for mixing the unusual with the traditional governs everything here.’ Spot-on.

I arrived early...not a soul in there...a waiter appeared...I had my pick of the tables from just the one he showed me to...there were no ‘reserved’ signs on the others but they were all implicitly taken...I ordered a **Girardin Faro** (5%)... the waiter seemed to approve...I was reassured. The restaurant is small and crammed with collections of bottles, coffee-grinders and pictures of the Belgian royal family on biscuit tins – it’s cosy and so, well...so Belgian.



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What to eat ? The *Carbonnades de boeuf à la Rodenbach* appealed, or perhaps the *Saumon aux poireaux et Kriek*...I went for the beef with a bottle of **Cantillon** *Gueuze 100% Lambic* (5%).

The restaurant was suddenly full and buzzing. Alain Fayt appeared from nowhere. He glanced at the two bottles on my table and said, immediately in English, 'I see you are a beer specialist'. Clever that – I had to order more. Perhaps my beer T-shirt gave the game away. I called for a bottle of **de Cam** *Oude Lambiek* (6.5%)...it had to be done. In fact, it turned out to be the last bottle they had in the cellar, and it really looked *Oude*.

I finished my meal and suggested to our, by now, ubiquitous host that I moved to a small unlaidd table by the bar to make room for other diners. Good move. Alain came and sat down opposite me eyeing the *Oude Lambiek*...could he...could he perhaps have a glass with me? Of course, I said – he took up the bottle reverently and poured a measure, then promptly upped and offered another glass of it to the young, well-dressed diner (who made me feel distinctly *mal habillé*) at the next table, and who seemed anxious to impress his girlfriend.

As Alain supped 'my' beer, he asked me to write something in his visitor book, which he nonchalantly opened at a page signed by the legendary Tim Webb himself. I was trying to think of something witty to write, something about being 'spontaneously fermented' (but was that a bit too Ken Dodd?), when Alain got up with a flourish to greet a new guest, and, in so doing, knocked over 'his' glass of **de Cam** – consternation – *désolé* - it was the last bottle – how could he make amends – do please try this bottle of **Van de Bossche** *Belgian stout* (9%) on the house – it's a very good year – oh, and could he just try a glass too ? How could I refuse such a generous host? The evening was really warming up. The place was packed – Alain flitted back and forth, a joke here, an occasional order taken there – the waiter had it all under control of course. I



asked him for some cheese.

Alain produced a bottle of schnapps... I now had three drinks on the go...we chatted – rather, *he* chatted – about his collections of biscuit tins and memorabilia and showed me his awards...about the *Great British Beer Festival*, 'of shoes and ships, and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings (Belgian, of course)'. I listened, nibbled my cheese, and was duly rewarded with a bottle of **de Ranke Noire de Dottignies** (9%).

Somewhere in the recesses of my brain – an alarm went – crumbs am I going to have to pay for all this ? Time for another piece of cheese Grommit, but no, Alain had gathered up the plate and taken it to someone else's table, complete with my cocktail stick. But who cares? I worked my way happily through the four bottles now in front of me...or was it five?

Later that night, after I had groped my way to my room, I fell into bed (and not out of the window) marvelling at the fact that, in the end, I only had to pay for my meal and the two drinks I had ordered, plus a tip for the hard-working waiter of course. What an evening... but breakfast was another and much less jolly story.

*Giles du Boulay*





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## AYLESBURY RING

### *Aston Clinton to Wendover*

The epic quest begun in April and May's *Swan Supping* is finally completed in this issue – the Aylesbury Ring is closed and the circumnavigation of Bucks' county town is completed.

The final section of the walk, a stretch of about three and a half miles from Aston Clinton to Wendover, is markedly different from the rest of the route and the traditional caveats about country walking can be ignored.

There should be no need for maps or complex directions as the route almost completely follows the canal towpath of the Wendover Arms of the Grand Union Canal. It is almost completely flat and free of any obstructions – there aren't even any stiles to clamber over – if memory serves correctly.

This is a very pleasant walk and, although the canal towpath can be muddy, it's not likely to turn into a boggy quagmire at any time of the year.

Both ends of the route are well served with public transport – even on a Sunday and in the evening. Aston Clinton is on the bus line between Aylesbury and all points Hertfordshire, while Wendover is on the Chiltern Railways line to London.

The route starts in Aston Clinton at the junction of London Road and the Lower Icknield Way where what used to be the Rising Sun is now the Royal Siam restaurant. Assuming that Thai food is not required at the start of the walk, a diversion off the route is required to reach the village's other pubs.



**Partridge Arms, Aston Clinton**

Continue down London Road and branch right at the Duck In, featured in the last issue, along Green End Road. This leads to the **Partridge Arms** – this is a free house with an L-shaped drinking area. Two real ales were available when the Partridge was visited – *Greene King IPA* and the very interesting *Cock and Bull* from local Milton Keynes micro, *Concrete Cow*. The pub doesn't open at lunchtime every day so it's worth calling ahead to check opening times.

Further along Green End Road, where it bends to the left, is the **Oak**. This is a large *Fuller's* house with an extensive beer garden. The pub has three large rooms. On entering, there is a public bar to the left with a collection of flags pinned to the ceiling.

To the right are two larger lounge bars with low wooden beams and plenty of tables for dining.



**Oak, Aston Clinton**

When visited *Fuller's London Pride* and *ESB* were on offer as well as a guest ale – *Tom Wood's Hop and Glory* – which was a nice surprise and rather tasty.

The most distant pub is the **Rothschild's Arms**. This can be reached by returning to London Road via Brook Street and heading down Weston Road at the roundabout by the Total garage. This is a one-room local featuring sport on satellite television. *Greene King IPA* was the real ale available in mid-November. The pub's advertised opening hours state that it is closed at lunchtime Monday to Thursday. It's a distance of nearly a mile from the **Rothschild's Arms** back up London Road to the starting point of this section of the Ring.



**Rothschild Arms, Aston Clinton**

From the Royal Siam junction, walk up London Road away from the village centre for a short distance and turn down Stable Bridge Road to the right. Follow this road for a couple of hundred yards before reaching a humped back bridge with traffic lights just after passing Green Park Training and Conference Centre.

Just over the bridge is a car park to the left and a footpath leads from here to the towpath of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. Turn left to follow the footpath south-westwards and underneath the road bridge.

The Wendover Arm was constructed at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, at the same time as the main Grand Union Canal, and was designed principally to collect water run off from the Chiltern Hills to fill the main canal at its highest point between Cow Roast and Bulbourne. It was also a navigable waterway for over a hundred years and played an important economic role in Wendover's history.

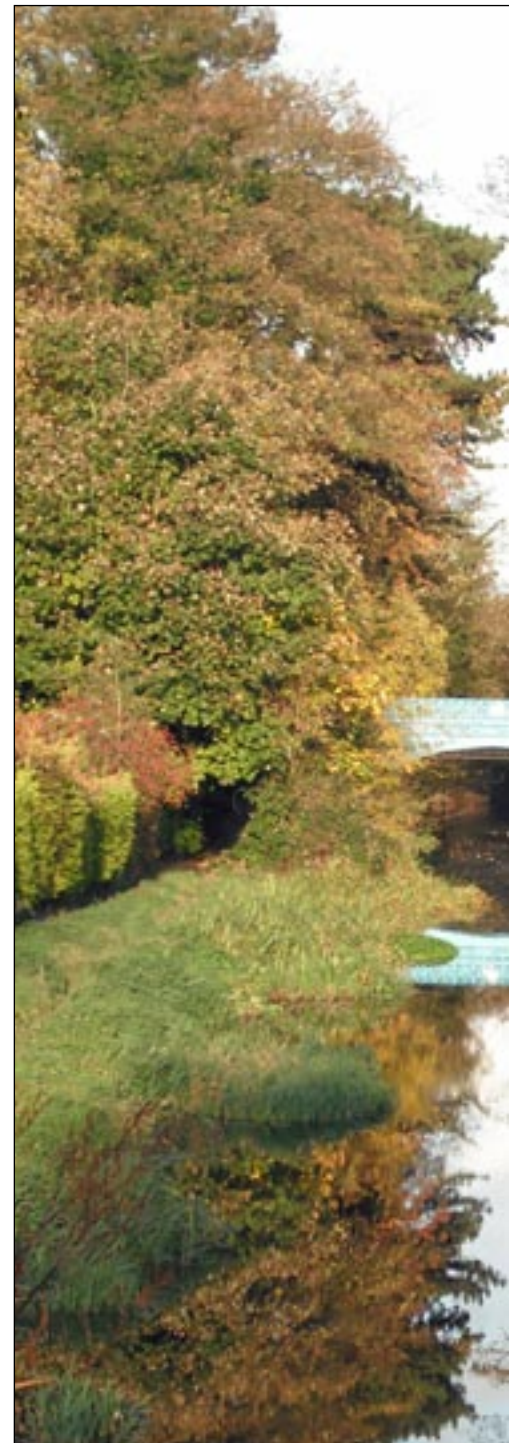
Ever since its construction the canal has suffered from leakage problems. These became increasingly difficult to remedy and it was eventually closed to traffic in 1904.

The Wendover Arm Trust was set up in the 1990s to restore the canal and has carried out important preservation work. The Trust's information boards can be found near the bridges en route.

The Aylesbury Ring follows the left bank of the canal towards Wendover for slightly over a mile passing mainly through woodland.

The path goes under a bridge approximately half way along. After a mile or so the woodland clears and there are good views across the Vale of Aylesbury.

Despite the sense of peace and tranquillity, this stretch passes through the middle of a major air force base. The hangars and grass airfield of RAF



## THE FINAL INSTALMENT

Halton can be seen on the other side of the canal while the base's playing fields are to the left. The base performs many training and support functions for the air force and thousands of new recruits go through their air force induction at Halton.

The base was created in the First World War when Halton House, another Rothschild property, was taken over by the air force. RAF Halton now extends over a large area between Halton village and Wendover Woods.

Just before the path reaches Halton village it passes beneath a picturesque, blue iron bridge, known as the Rothschild Bridge (pictured below).

The towpath crosses the minor road bridge in Halton and then resumes on the right-hand side of the canal. The canal makes a long turn towards the left and passes under Perch Bridge, which leads to World's End.



After the bridge, an area known as the Wides is reached. This is where the canal broadens out substantially into a series of wide ponds. The Wides are an excellent area for wildlife, as is the rest of the canal. Many water loving birds can be spotted from swans, moorhens and mallards to rarer species such as kingfishers. Large numbers of dragon and damselflies also enjoy the wide expanses of water in the summer.

It's a distance of about a mile or so from Perch Bridge, past the Wides and into Wendover. There are good views of Wendover Woods to the left. The highest point in the Chiltern Hills is concealed within the forest.

Nearing the end of section the remains of a railway that used to cross the canal can be spotted. It was constructed to bring supplies to the Halton base from the main railway line to London.

The towpath enters Wendover and terminates at Wharf Road, near John Colet School. The Aylesbury Ring heads to the right to finish in the centre of the village. However, a short diversion to the left leads to the **Pack Horse**.



*Pack Horse, Wendover*

Cross the road, heading left and then immediately turn right down Icknield Close. As the road turns there is an alleyway to the right that leads to Clay Lane. The **Pack Horse** is at the end of the road on the junction with Tring Road.

The **Pack Horse** is a **Fuller's** pub that has been an entry in the **Good Beer Guide** for several years. It is a friendly local with satellite TV and games at the far end of the bar and a quieter area around the fireplace at the front of the pub. The pub serves **Fuller's** regular beers, such as *London Pride*, but is also one of the best places locally to find their seasonal beers, such as *London Porter*, *Red Fox* and *Mr Harry*.

Immediately adjoining the **Pack Horse** is a row of timber-framed houses, known as Anne Boleyn Cottages. They were said to be a wedding gift from King Henry VIII to his second wife, whose family lived in the locality. Henry VIII is also closely associated with the **King's Head** in Aylesbury.

Walk past the cottages towards the centre of the village. There is one final pub to visit before the Aylesbury ring is completed.

The **George and Dragon** is at the junction of the High Street and Aylesbury road, near the



*George & Dragon, Wendover*

mini-roundabout. This large pub also trades as a Thai restaurant – with a smaller room and an alcove to the right of the bar reserved for dining. However, there is a large area to the left of the bar dedicated to drinking with sturdy, rustic furniture and wooden floorboards. The pub serves three real ales: **Greene King IPA**, **Fuller's London Pride** and **Morland Old Speckled Hen**.

The Wendover clock tower marks the end of the journey. However, a glance up the High Street shows the awaiting **White Swan** and **Red Lion Hotel** which were visited in the first instalment. The tempting prospect of more beer might make one seriously consider setting off on the journey again and giving the Ring another spin.

*Mike Clarke*



*Clock Tower, Wendover*

## LOCAL BREWERY NEWS



Having won a Bronze at the **GBBF** in August with *VPA*, **Vale** has won another award. This time **SIBA** (**Society of Independent Brewers**), held the Midland beer competition at Nottingham Beer Festival. **Vale VPA** won Gold in the Best Bitter category (Ian Mackey is shown left receiving the award) and *Vale Pale Ale (VPA)* 4.2% now goes forward to represent the Midlands region in the National **SIBA** competition next year.

The December monthly special beer is called *Shire Ale*. After visiting Brill, the common became the inspiration for the Shires in J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy 'The Lord of The Rings'.

A ruby brown coloured bitter. A combination of four hops Fuggles, Celeia, Galena and Goldings provide a soft bitterness with a fruity aroma. Crystal and Chocolate Maris Otter malt provide body and warmth on a winters day.

In November a brew of *Wyche* ended up with too much crystal malt added. The result at 4.1% was stronger than the normal 3.9% that *Wyche* is regularly produced at. A cask of this was served at the Haddenham Village Winter Beer Festival on the 21st November, under the title *Piltdown*. The 21st November being the date that Piltdown man was exposed as being a long standing hoax. The difference here being that the 'error' was exposed up front. The beer itself was extremely well received.

By the time this is in print **Vale Brewery** will have held another Open Day at Brill. Samples of many beers were available and the first of this years batches of *Good King Senseless* 5.2% and *Hadda's Winter Solstice* 4.1% were sampled. The House of Spice Indian restaurant from Haddenham were on hand to provide hot warming food.

Two other launches on the Open Day were not new beers, but beer related. The new **Vale Brewery** T-Shirts, featuring a colourful design, were sold for the first time. Also related to Gifts for the drinker, **Vale** now sell Gift Vouchers. These can be personalised and will make another great gift for the drinker who has everything, but wants more **Vale** beer!



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## 30 YEARS OF THE CHILTERN BREWERY

It is no surprise that Buckinghamshire's oldest independent brewery is in celebratory mood.

With recent silver medal success, the launch of a new website and the beginning of their 30th year as a family run brewery, they can proudly raise a glass of their fine seasonal ale to toast a very good year and the prospect of an exciting 2010.

George and Tom Jenkinson saw high recognition for their *300's Old Ale* at the **SIBA** Midlands regional competition on October 8th. With over 500 beers from 240 breweries at the beer festival, The **Chiltern Brewery** was awarded silver medal in the 'porters, strong milds, old ales & stouts' category.



Tom Jenkinson and father, Richard, represented the brewery. 'We are commemorating our 30th year of brewing and this is an excellent way to begin twelve months of celebrations. We are thrilled with the result. There were so many high quality contenders at the festival that we feel truly proud to have gained this award' said Tom.

The **Chiltern Brewery** is passionate about brewing fine English ales of the highest quality using choice class A malt and hops and wholesome natural ingredients. Their seasonal, bottle conditioned, *Glad Tidings Winter Stout* is currently available with their popular draught *Oatmeal Stout* coming on tap at the end of November. They are also now hand bottling the *Lord-Lieutenant's Porter* in-house.

The recent launch of their new website promises to offer an excellent online sales facility and support for their customers and stockists with information on their popular brewery tours, the brewery shop and their award winning real ale pub in the centre of Aylesbury, the **Farmers' Bar**.

Other news includes the introduction of a new six bottle pack which reflects the design of the website and makes an excellent gift option. This will be available from the website and the brewery shop from the beginning of December along with many other Christmas shopping solutions.

The **Farmers' Bar** has a new fixed price menu offering two courses for £9.95 and three courses



for £12.95. The menu combines classic dishes using the **Chiltern Brewery's** fine English ales with many locally sourced ingredients.

'We have had a very busy year and feel prepared for a period of exciting growth and development. We are holding several events in the run up to Christmas and will soon be announcing more events to celebrate our 30th year through 2010, all of which will be detailed on our website at [www.chilternbrewery.co.uk](http://www.chilternbrewery.co.uk)' said George Jenkinson.

<Prepared from a press release from **Chiltern Brewery**. - Ed>

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## PROHIBITION

It has been reported recently that a small-minded Police Chief in one of our former colonies has banned the sale of Fentiman's *Victorian Lemonade* to minors (up to age 21!) on the grounds that it contains 0.5% alcohol and because its bottle gives the appearance of 'imitation liquor'.

I understand that 'New Labor', always anxious to beg and fetch for their US masters, is actively considering 1920s style Prohibition.

In order to soften up the drinker voters, undercover government agents have even infiltrated **CAMRA**, persuading them to launch a campaign for a cheap under 2.8% 'People's Pint', as it is patronisingly called. Perhaps it'll be laced with a special dandelion and burdock gripe water to sedate the binge-drinkers. The Tories are also in on the act, saying they will slap massive tax increases on strong cider and ban the sale of cheap wine to the plebs, although they also make a 'cask-iron' promise to reduce the duty on *Château Lafite Rothschild*, and *Dom Perignon Vintage* and to introduce whizzo 24 hour duty-free zones around Eton and Westminster. The Lib Dems used



to be indecisive on this issue, but now they are not so sure.

Alarmed at the prospect of my pint of real ale being watered down, I took to the streets of Aylesbury to find out what the people think. Although their views seemed pretty obvious from the very first photo I managed to take.

Neil Prickles, a roving dark horse, eyed my off-the-shoulder crop top and started to whimper something

about 'lashings of ginger beer' – I made my excuses and left. Local cellarmen, Norman Beermonkey, who is usually pretty laid back, got quite animated '*the way things are going, I'll be out of a job, I mean if they going to start pushing these new flavoured alcohol-free beers, traditional well-kept cellars will soon become no more than dark and deserted dungeons*'. Neil reappeared at that point – '*dungeons, did someone say dungeons?*' I made more excuses.

I then came upon a group of miserable looking harridans protesting about the evils of drink. Unfortunately, their campaign appears to have backfired, as all their men folk have left them for the delights of the wicked city. I couldn't help but feel that this was the true face of the nanny state.

A man loitering outside the **Yellow Parrot**, who gave what I took to be an assumed name, Andy Capon, said in a threatening manner that people like me, campaigning against prohibition, could ruin his business. Although he did then offer to sell me some cheap booze which he had stashed in a van round the corner. I hurriedly took his photo and dashed into the **Hobgoblin**.

As I sat there nursing a pint of the real thing and thinking about the reactions I had got on the street, I wondered whether the prohibition of alcohol might actually have an upside. As pubs close down at an alarming rate across the country, new style 'speakeasies' might spring up where responsible drinkers could meet and chat, and enjoy real ale without interference, subject, of course, to the usual bung to the cops.

*Louise Dugalby*



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## OBITUARY



It came as a huge and heart-wrenching shock to learn that Dick Moore, a local **CAMRA** stalwart, and real ale connoisseur, had tragically passed away in September. For all those who didn't know Dick Moore, he was a remarkable human being! Plagued by illness for many years, Dick was never a whinger or whiner, but instead used his many array of attributes to maximum effect. I had the honour of knowing him for a decade or so, where I saw first hand how to smile in the face of adversity.

Mr. Moore had an unparalleled knowledge of bus, train and tram routes and times around towns and cities throughout the British Isles, and I was lucky enough to see this modest man in action at Sheffield a few years back. His fervour knew no bounds as he took in both real ale and steam locos, with the two being intermingled many times in his past. Alongside fellow real ale enthusiasts Bruce, Giles and Mike, amongst others, he plotted beery exploits around our great country.

Dick's personal utopia though was a pint of **Orkney Dark Island** (4.6) at the Guildford Arms in West Register Street, Edinburgh. I will be in Sheffield, South Yorkshire in November, visiting some of the hostelries that we both imbibed in some years ago. A pint or three will be toasted 'to me old mucker' Dick Moore, a mild well-mannered man and a thoroughly decent gent.

If it is true that only the good go to heaven, then Mr. Dick Moore will be there right now, raising his glass, seated on the top table!

*Alan Sheppard*



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# MERRY CHRISTMAS

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## THE GRAVEDIGGERS (PART 2)

James, a rugby playing type in his early thirties, stood proudly opposite the pub, pointing out its idyllic features to his girlfriend, Kim.

'Isn't that the essence of the British countryside – a beautiful thatched, old-fashioned pub right on the village green, next to the church? You don't find those in Hackney do you?'

'No, but we've got plenty of dives with the same grubby net curtains hanging in the windows,' she said. 'Looks like they've not been cleaned in years.'

'Part of the olde world charm,' James said. 'Just like the roses growing over the door.'

'Roses?' asked Kim. 'That's just a bunch of mangy old ivy. Looks like it'll pull the place down if it spreads any further – the returning to nature look all right.'

'We're right in the heart of Midsomer Murders country here, you know?' he said.

'You don't say? Looks like you'd be taking your life in your hands going in that place,' said Kim. 'What a creepy name – the **Gravediggers** – and the pub sign's hanging half off like it's about to drop on someone's head and kill them. Wouldn't be surprised if you found the landlord hidden dead under the floorboards.'

'We do find him down on the floorboards sometimes, usually after he's been at the *Cripplecock Scrumpy* for a few hours,' said James. 'But you really need to see how unspoilt it is inside.'

The two crossed the lane running past the **Gravediggers** and James pushed at the door. And pushed again. It was shut firm.

'Well, it's only five to one,' said Kim looking at her watch. 'You know, in London, we have pubs that actually open their doors at lunchtime.'

James hammered on the wooden door. 'Tony. Tony. Open up you miserable sod.' He turned to talk to Kim. 'Look, I've got a plan. I'll go round the back – take a look through the windows. See if he's left any doors open so I can flush him out. You stay here in case he opens up the front.'

He rushed around the back of the building into the beer garden – an expanse of long grass peppered with the odd rotten bench and shredded parasol. Kim could hear shouts of 'Open up, I want a drink' from behind the pub.

Kim was a peroxide London girl from Hackney and she dressed more X-Factor than Midsomer – with leather boots and ripped jeans. She stood in front of the pub door as it slowly creaked open.

A dishevelled man in a vest emerged.

'What d'yer want, then?' he said, blinking into the sun.

'Perhaps a drink?' she suggested.

James came running from round the back of the pub. 'Ah, Tony, there you are,' he called.

'Alright James. Look what the cat's dragged in here. I was just about to tell this, er, lady about our dress code at the Gravediggers.'

He then whispered to James 'We don't want her sort round here.'

'What's wrong with me?' Kim said.

'No work clothes. Yer jeans are all ripped,' said Tony.

'I bought them like that. They cost me £150 from Diesel,' she said.

'Diesel? Funny looking mechanic. If you wear 'em in a garage then they're work clothes aren't they? £150?' Tony scratched his head.

'Tony, the only way that dress code makes sense is because hardly any of your regulars has a job – or at least a legal one,' said James. 'Anyway, you seem to have met my new girlfriend, Kim.'

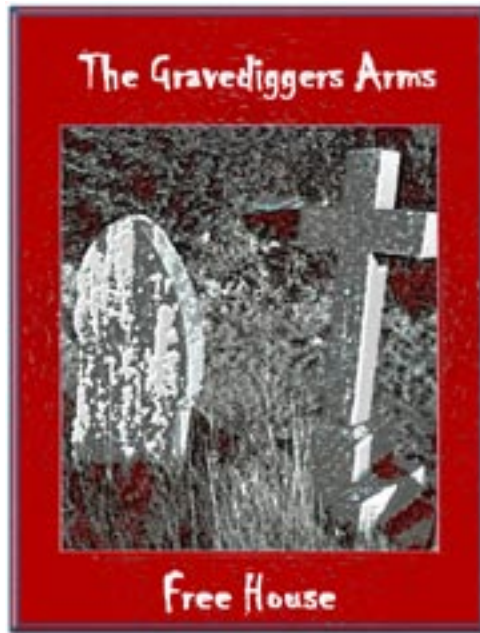
Tony looked at them both and snorted.

'Well, can we come in?' asked James.

'S'pose,' Tony grunted.

He turned his back and walked through the door. James and Kim followed Tony into the gloom. As soon as she entered Kim started coughing and spluttering. 'What's that smell?' she asked.

'I think Tony would say it was the unique ambience,' said James.



A loud shriek rent the air, followed by a thud and cursing as Kim tripped over and hit the carpet. 'What the hell was that on the floor that I fell over? Can't you turn the lights on?'

Tony was behind the bar. 'Sorry love, seen the price of electricity? And look you've woken up Old Pete.'

'What? Was that one of your customers on the floor I just tripped over? I thought you'd only just opened up?' she asked.

'What? What?' Old Pete shouted in confusion as he awoke. 'Another Southern Comfort and Coke please barman.'

'See you had a lock in last night Tony?' James asked. 'What time did you go on till?'

'Don't ask me,' said Tony. 'I passed out behind the bar about one o'clock. Rest of 'em had their drinks lined up.'

'So he's been lying there all night?' Kim asked.

'People say he lives here anyway,' James said and turned to the man on the floor. 'Alright Old

Pete. Joe not here?'

'Oh, all right, James. Oh yes, Joe's here somewhere.' Old Pete kicked a shadowy pile lying under a table. It yelped. 'Oh there he be.'

Kim heard scuffling and looked down at the floor. A small furry creature darted from under the table to the wall, brushing past her boot. She stood still. 'Was that a m-?'

'Mouse? Yeah, little bugger but don't worry, I've put loads of poison down all over the place. He won't last long,' said Tony. 'Anyway, I ain't got all day. You said you wanted a drink. What d'yer want?' Tony said to Kim.

'My head's a bit sore this morning – so I'll have a coffee please.'

Old Pete whistled. Tony's eyes rolled to the ceiling. James muscles tensed.

'I said, what yer drinking? This is a pub.'

'Coffee's a drink,' Kim protested.

'No, it's not. It's food...'

'If it's anything like his beer it'd come in slices –' chipped in Old Pete.

'– and the kitchen's shut anyway,' Tony continued.

'When will the kitchen be open again?' she asked.

'Probably never. It's been shut the last two years,' Old Pete shouted from the floor.

'Can't you just put the kettle on, Tony,' asked James. 'You can do some instant Nescafe can't you?'

'Health and safety,' said Tony. 'All that boiling water...anyway you've been lettin' me down James. I suppose it's all her fault.' He pointed at Kim.

'What's my fault?' she asked.

'My poor sales. You've been damaging by business through taking him away from his natural environment – the friendly local. He don't drink enough beer any more. Truth is, he ain't much good to me now. Time was he'd come in here every night – eight pints minimum, double figures most nights of Tony's well-kept nectar. And then, more often than not, he'd puke up there in that corner because he wouldn't make it to the toilets but, course, he'd come back for more.' Kim glared at James in disapproval. 'Them were the days – now he's down to six pints a night and it must be all your bad influence. I'm a landlord and I deserve a better class of customer – not jokers who come in a pub and asking for coffee? Dear me. What is the world coming to?'

'Pubs do coffee in London,' she said.

'Yeah? You'll be telling me next that pubs in London are open all day or that most of 'em do food or they even have families in 'em or they let the customers try the beer first or even that they make any money. Well let me tell you Miss, this ain't London and there's no demand for any of that gimmickry round here.'

'Tony, why don't we do this? You pour us a couple of pints of your finest Septic Fleabite and then go and make yourself a cup of coffee,' suggested James.

## GRAVEDIGGERS CONTINUED

'Was what I was going to do anyway,' said Tony.

'But then, bring the coffee out here, I'll swap it for a proper drink and then Kim can have the coffee – so then it's like I'm treating you to a proper drink.'

Tony scratched his head. 'Err. Nice one James. I'll go and put the kettle on.' Tony disappeared behind the bar.

'Miserable old sod he is,' said Old Pete getting up from the floor and crawling to his barstool. 'You know he's not a happy bunny?'

'Is he ever?' asked Kim.

'Suppose not,' said Old Pete, 'but he's worse than ever now. You know he thought he'd sold the pub?'

'So I heard,' said James.

'Well, he'd got his stuff out and wanted to knock it down. He'd even slipped old Armstrong a couple of hundred quid to have a so-called accident in the middle of the night with his bulldozer that would smash into the pub wall. But the council got wind of it all and they wouldn't allow for a change of use.'

Joe stirred from under the table and clambered along the floor. 'On account of the pub providing a community service, like,' he said. 'What would we do all day without it?'

'So what's he going to do?' asked Kim. 'The place is an unhygienic, dark, depressing, scruffy, untended pit that hasn't had any money spent on it in twenty years and his customer service skills are out of the stone age.'

'Yeah, that's what we like about it,' said Old Pete, wistfully. 'Well, he's still selling, but for less money, to a bunch of village nobs who want to keep it as a sort of community asset.'

'But 'course they're not going to actually run it themselves,' said Joe. 'No. They're looking for some mad fool to do it for them.'



Tony returned with a cup of coffee, picking up the end of the conversation. 'A mug's game is the pub game he said. They'll make no money out of it. I've sweated and worked every hour of the day for this pub, tried everything to make it work –'

'How about cleaning it?' asked Kim.

'Cleaner died three years ago...' chipped in Old Pete.

'I expect she's still here somewhere,' suggested Kim.

'People like this...authenticity,' Tony said, dragging his finger through the coating of dust on the bar and licking it off his fingertip.

'Problem is, who'd be mad enough to take this place on?' asked Old Pete.

James sank his pint of *Septic Fleabite* down in one and cast a glance around the place and gestured with open arms. 'Who indeed, gentlemen? Who indeed?'

Kim looked at James with mounting horror. 'Oh no, James, you're not dragging me into any mad

scheme you might have.'

'Why not – someone could even start serving proper coffee,' James declared.

He winked at Kim but her gaze was fixed on the mug. 'James, what's this in my coffee?' she asked before letting out a huge scream and collapsing on the floor. The mug dropped on to the flagstones by the bar and shattered into pieces, creating a brown puddle on the floor. In the middle of the pool was a small, dead, furry creature.

'You can't please some people,' said Tony shaking his head. 'Not even happy when they get a free gift.'

**To be continued...**

*Charlie Mackle*

# Brill Beer ... Award winning local beers direct from Vale Brewery this Xmas




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## PACK HORSE BUNKER



On the 10th of October, in a small corner of Wendover, the calendar was turned back 65+ years as the **Pack Horse**, Wendover, held their *Help for Heroes* event and turned the pub into a WW2 bunker.

This was a really superbly presented day when the pub regulars and the local community pulled together to make it a great success. The RAFA club delved into the inner recesses of their museum to find a genuine 1940s air raid siren, which they serviced and ensured that it was in full working order and they also produced some camouflage netting. RAF Halton provided a large tent and Graham Coulson found tin sheets and a lot of sandbags. This only mentions three helpers among the many who gave their time and expertise to set up this event and the numbers of participants who filled the place to overflowing.

There was an auction in the evening and also a raffle, the prizes for which were donated by local people and businesses. The siren was exercised from time to time causing those outside to rush in to the bar! With these and the community singing of the old wartime songs things really went with a swing – yes strains of the Glenn Miller Band drifted over the village! It was truly wonderful how every one young and not so young entered into the spirit of the evening. Finally, plaudits must go to the management and staff of the **Pack Horse** for conceiving the whole thing then seeing it through to fruition.

The event has raised more than £2400 with more donations still coming in. For more photos and details go to [www.wendover-news.co.uk](http://www.wendover-news.co.uk)

Mike Clemence

## VILLAGE PUB WINNERS



The **George & Dragon** in Quainton has been voted the 'Best Village Pub in Aylesbury Vale' for 2009.

The picture of the presentation of the award shows Darren and Charlotte Curtis with Cllr Janet Blake, Chairman of Aylesbury Vale District Council. AVDC runs the award every year in memory of the late Councillor Ted Payne and to recognise the important role that village pubs play in community life, especially if there are few other local meeting places.

The runner-up for the main award was the **Crown**, Cuddington. In the other categories, the 'Best Food Pub' award went to the **Queen's Head**, Wing, and the runner up was the **King and Queen** in Wendover. 'Best Community and Family Pub' went to the **New Inn**, Padbury and 'Highly Commended' awards went to the **Bell**, Chearsley and the **Old Red Lion**, Great Brickhill.

All 14 finalists in the competition have been chosen to appear in a guide of recommended village pubs of Aylesbury Vale. Copies will be available from tourist information centres etc. across the Vale from December.

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## WOOLPACK REOPENS



The **Woolpack** in Stoke Mandeville, which was completely gutted by fire in the early hours of 26th April this year, re-opened on 5th November after a restoration lasting only slightly over six months. The speed of the rebuilding has been astonishing as work only really started in earnest during the summer and involved recreating a thatched roof among other features.

The pub is primarily a dining destination but, since re-opening has offered some interesting real ales, including one from a micro brewery. In addition to **Brakspear's Bitter** and **Taylor's Landlord**, **Purity Brewery's Pure UBU** from Warwickshire was recently on sale.



The picture of the **Woolpack** as a ruin, shown left, was taken on the 11th July, and shows the amount of work that had to be done.

**Mike Clarke**

## FLYING DOGS



One of the few perks of being a newsletter editor is getting an occasional invite to a beer tasting. I was kindly invited at the end of October, to a wonderful pub in Soho, the **Dog & Duck**, to meet the brewing team from **Flying Dog Brewery** from Colorado in the US of A.

Amongst an august selection of beer writers, including the editor of the **Good Beer Guide**, Roger Protz, I was treated to tastings of the fantastic range of beers that **Flying Dog** produce.

Amongst the gems on display during the informal session with the head brewer, Matt Brophy (pictured above), were **Classic Pale Ale** (5.5% ABV - also known as 'Doggie Style') and **Gonzo Imperial Porter** (7.8% ABV) which is mysteriously dark with a rich and malty body. Bottles of both these beers are available at selected **Tesco** outlets.

**David Roe**

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## Branch Diary

*Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!*

### DECEMBER

#### Thursday 3rd WHEELER END SOCIAL

8:45pm Chequers, 9:30pm Brickmakers' Arms

#### Friday 11th AYLESBURY CHRISTMAS PUB CRAWL

Starts at the Hop Pole 7:00pm then popping in to as many places as possible including Harrow, Rockwood, Hobgoblin and King's Head followed by a curry (depending on stamina!).

Please see the website for an itinerary.

#### Wednesday 16th NEW PUB SOCIAL

8:00pm Honey Bee, Fairford Leys, Aylesbury.

#### Thursday 24th CHRISTMAS EVE LUNCHTIME SOCIAL

12 noon, King's Head, Aylesbury

Celebrate with us at our Last Minute Christmas Shopping Social.

#### Tuesday 29th WENDOVER CRAWL

7:00pm Shoulder of Mutton, 7:30pm Red Lion, 8:15pm White Swan, 9:00pm Pack Horse

### JANUARY 2010

#### Saturday 2nd SHREWSBURY PUB CRAWL

Visit 10 Good Beer Guide Pubs using Wrexham and Shropshire Railway service from Banbury. To be confirmed – see website for details.

#### Monday 4th BRANCH MEETING

8:30pm Wheel, Naphill (to be confirmed - please check website)

#### Tuesday 12th SOCIAL EVENING

8:45pm Plough and Anchor, Kingswood; 9:30pm George and Dragon, Quainton.

#### Thursday 21st PENN/TYLER'S GREEN SOCIAL

8:30pm Old Queen's Head; 9:15pm Red Lion; 10:00pm Horse and Jockey.

#### Tuesday 26th REVAMPED PUB SOCIAL

8.30pm, The Bootleggers (formerly Flint Cottage), High Wycombe

### FEBRUARY

#### Monday 15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8:00pm King's Head, Aylesbury

All local **CAMRA** members should attend in order to have their say in how the branch is to be run for the next year.

Free 'nibbles' available.

### OCTOBER

#### Friday 29th/Saturday 30th AYLESBURY BEER FESTIVAL

Eskdale Road Community Centre, Stoke Mandeville

Our annual charity beer festival held in conjunction with the 'Florence Nightingale Hospice Charity'.

Further details can be found on our website

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

CATCH UP WITH THE MEMBERS DURING  
BRANCH SOCIALS WITH THE BRANCH MOBILE  
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## DON'T MISS OUT!

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

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Advertising rates are :- 1/4 page £60 (B & W £40), 1/2 page £120 (B & W £80), full page £200 (B & W £135). 10% discounts for payment in advance. Add 10% for front page adverts. We can even create the advert for you at no extra charge! All bookings are taken as run-of-paper and colour adverts are on a first come, first served basis. Please make all cheques payable to **CAMRA/V & W**.

Copy deadline for next issue, due out 1st February, is 14th January 2010.

**Subscriptions :-** Swan Supping is distributed to over 250 pubs 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 for each edition you wish to receive to the Editor 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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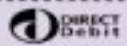
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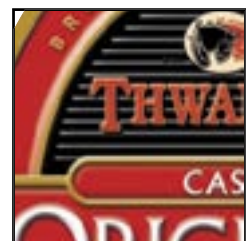
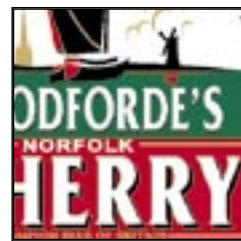
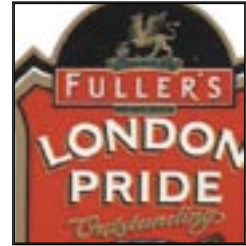
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