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the magazine of the North Hampshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

ISSUE 16 JANUARY - MARCH 2017

Crowds enjoying
the 2016
Basingstoke
Octoberfest
See page 6



CAMPAIGN
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REAL ALE

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- ... & LOADS MORE

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Editor's Shout

A warm welcome to you

I suspect most of you reading this will derive great enjoyment from popping into a pub of an evening or over a weekend and partaking of a few pints. You may also then be somewhat aggrieved at being made to feel guilty about this simple pleasure. Last year, guidance from the government's Chief Medical Officer included what many of us feel are somewhat draconian recommendations regarding so-called 'safe' levels of drinking. Indeed the guidance claimed that there was no real 'safe' level of alcohol consumption. This flies in the face of other experts' findings that moderate consumption of alcohol on a regular basis may actually be good for you. No matter then, that the level in the CMO's recommendations is far lower than other western countries including Ireland, Denmark, the USA, Canada and Spain, but also that this same level is laid down for both men and women. Also no distinction is made to take into account age, body size or fitness.

It now transpires that the Chief Medical Officer responsible for this, Dame Sally Davies, is understood to be influenced by the Institute for Alcohol Studies which is funded by an organisation that used to be called the UK Temperance Alliance. So, no surprise there then.

The drinker is also constantly haranged by charities that team up with Prohibitionists to promote events like 'Stoptober' and 'Dry January'. Leaving aside the somewhat unsavoury linking of charities with misleading anti-drink propaganda, all this is very damaging to the UK's pubs industry. The months immediately after the Christmas period can be very lean for our pubs so I for one will be cheerfully ignoring the 'bad science' (as GBG editor Roger Protz described the CMO's guidance) and enjoying a few pints in some of our excellent pubs. I hope you do the same.

Cheers! Jim Turner

(Magazine Editor, North Hampshire CAMRA)

Online Beer Lines:
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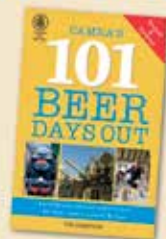


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Photos: Peter Yarlett

Pub Focus

The Eagle, Abbots Ann

Question: Where would you find Virgin's Crowns, Witches Bottles, a children's swing made from a cider press ... and the Eagle Inn?

Answer: Abbots Ann - a chocolate-box village about two miles south of Andover, lying between the A303 and the A343.

Situated in the heart of the village, the Eagle could be described as the heart of the village, or as one resident put it, "The Home of the Origins of All Good Ideas". Built in 1865, it replaced an older inn opposite. This earlier building burnt down and reputedly the firemen were more interested in saving and sampling the beer than saving the building! The present pub is a redbrick Victorian building, a traditional two-bar pub with car park, garden, sheltered smoking area and a skittle alley which is for hire.

Alan and Kate have been manning the pumps for the almost nine years and they've been in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide ever since. Alan has a background in the drinks trade since his youth and takes great pride in what is sold. The pub serves good beer (and local village cider – *The DeCider* – see 'The Cider Binn', page 16) and good food to thirsty and hungry customers. The house beer is currently Bowman's *Wallops Wood* supported by three ever changing beers, mostly from

independent local breweries such as Three Castles, Upham and so on. During June each year there is a very popular beer festival, usually themed to provide beers not normally available in this area. This year's festival is 9th-11th June.

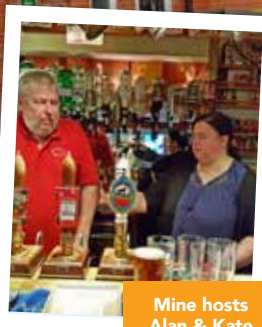
Sport has a big part to play in life at the pub with ladies and gents pool teams, a large screen TV for sporting events, and regular visits to race meetings. Trips are also made to other beer festivals, the Great Dorset Steam Fair, and other activities such as sea fishing.

Lunchtime food is mostly of the pub grub type with more substantial fare in the evening. The pub had a good reputation for food as long ago as 1925 when Prince Henry, third son of George V, dined here after being stranded in Abbots Ann. He later had a sofa shakedown bed in a village cottage.

Anyone visiting the Eagle is assured of a very warm welcome from both Alan and Kate and will be able to sample some of the best beers in the area. Once there I guarantee you'll not want to leave.

Abbots Ann, Andover, SP11 7PG
theeagleinn.wordpress.com

Peter Yarlett



Mine hosts
Alan & Kate



The Eagle Inn
Abbots Ann

Checking the beers
before the deluge!

Hampshire

OctoberFest 2016

Fun for all the family!

The 8th annual Hampshire OctoberFest took place in the grounds of the Basingstoke Sports & Social Club on the weekend of 7th – 9th October. This year was the biggest and most successful event yet, and the weather was reasonably kind to us with plenty of sunshine and just one shower!

Hampshire Octoberfest is organized by the Wessex Heritage Trust, and is a showcase for the best of the region's beers, ciders, wines, and foods. As a beer festival, it is the biggest in Hampshire and is a firm favourite with keen beer aficionados.

The event is also an excellent weekend for the whole family, with plenty of rides and attractions plus live music from local and regional bands. This year, Sunday was a special Family Day with children allowed in for free, and plenty of new attractions such as theatre workshops and storytelling. There was even a re-enactment of the first ever

"OktoberFest" from 1810, which was a celebration of the wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria and Princess Therese Von Saxe-Hildburghausen.

At the Hampshire OctoberFest, the North Hampshire CAMRA branch manages the supply of beer & cider to the main beer tent, and a small army of CAMRA volunteers help with the erection of the stillage and day-to-day operation of the beer tent.

For OctoberFest 2016 we decided to open up the list of brewers to include some of the most popular beers from Berkshire, Surrey, and Sussex in addition to all our favorites from Hampshire. This meant that we were able to offer over 170 different beers from 38 brewers, and we managed to sell it all! Apologies to visitors who only came on the Sunday afternoon when there were 'only' 30 or 40 beers remaining ...

As usual, we asked the OctoberFest visitors to vote for their favourite beers and ciders of the show. The results are:



Quick Quiz For answers see page 12

Each clue has a double meaning with the same one-word answer. Rearrange the first letter of each answer to find a **Manchester micro-brewery** established 1982 as a resurrected bird, they say. (7 letters).

1. Isn't neither
2. Mine a cherry stone
3. Factor and ray
4. Between Milan team
5. Regularly – big family
6. Team and its composition
7. Play around a nag

Brenda Cross



Overall winner in the beer category:

Vibrant Forest – *Oat and Coffee Stout*

Overall winner in the cider category: **Tutts**

Clump – *Special Reserve Dry Cider*

Honourable mentions: **Hop Art** -

Hoppy blonde; **Bingham's** - *Vanilla Stout*;

Andwell – *Pilsner*; **Longdog** - *Lamplight Porter*

Over the three days of Octoberfest we welcomed over 8,500 visitors, who between them managed to consume around 16,000 pints of beer and 5,000 pints of cider. A big "thank-you" must go to all the volunteers who gave their time and effort to make the 2016 OctoberFest the best one yet.

Mike Hodson

Festival Organising Committee

Photos © Mike Hodson



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Bar Chat

News & gossip around the North Hampshire branch area

The CAMRA North Hampshire web presence has been brought up-to-date and was relaunched in mid-November 2016. Check it out on www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk. Thanks must go to the branch Pubs & Clubs Officer John Buckley who has been the driving force behind the new look.

East of Area

Broomsquires, formerly the 'Tadley Treacle Mine' was closed at the time of writing and *Beer Lines* understands there are plans for it to be converted into a private dwelling.

Hooray! **The Mole in Monk Sherborne** has finally reopened, more than a year after we were originally told it would. Fans of West Berkshire Brewery's Good Old Boy should be pleased.

In November 2016 the **New Inn, Sarum Hill**, Basingstoke, owned by Punch Taverns, reopened under new management. The house beer is Coor's Sharp's Doombar with one changing guest beer which at the time of writing was Greene King Abbot.

The newly-reopened **Wheatsheaf**, an Enterprise pub at the top end of Sarum Hill in Basingstoke, regularly serves well-kept Butcombe Bitter and Young's Bitter alongside the ubiquitous Doombar.

In the previous issue we reported that the Greene King's **Bakers Arms** in Basingstoke was to be sold. Rumours at the time included possible interest from Weatherspoon's which owns the Maidenhead Inn next door. That turned out to be unfounded; instead *Beer Lines* now understands that the pub is to be acquired by the Spirit Pub Group, a company that itself was acquired by Greene King in 2015. So, not much change there then.

In December 2016 Hall & Woodhouse closed the **Wellington Arms Stratfield Turgis** and handed back the lease to the Stratfield Saye Estate. At the time of writing *Beer Lines* has no more information about the future of the building as a pub/hotel.

The Dove, Micheldever Station is now under new management. Licensees Charlie and Joanna, who live in Micheldever, took over the pub late last year and are turning its fortunes around. Beer-wise the policy is to source only local beers – Red Cat, Itchen Valley, Andwell and others have featured so far. Food, not surprisingly, looks scrumptious as Charlie used to work for Rick Stein.

West of Area

New GBG entry, the **Lunar Hare** in Weyhill Road Andover, closed its doors on 4th November. Owners Enterprise Inns say they are "...committed to the pub and hope to have it open again as soon as possible".

At the time of writing the **George Inn, Thruxton** (Enterprise Inns) is currently closed.

In Monxton, the **Black Swan** was still closed at the time of writing. The people of Monxton are seeking a buy-out from Enterprise Inns.

The Plough Longparish (Enterprise Inns) closed on 9th October 2016, ten weeks after being opened by Allen and Helen Watts who at that time were also running the Lunar Hare (also Enterprise Inns) in Andover.

The **White Hart, Penton Mewsey** (Enterprise Inns) was closed at the time of writing.

In Andover, the **Swallow** (Enterprise Inns) in **Pilgrims Way/River Way** closed in August, a year after an expensive refit. In November the pub was taken on by new licensees and at the time of

writing was serving one cask ale: Coor's Sharp's Doombar.

[The Five Bells, Nether Wallop](#) (not Enterprise Inns) has remained closed and vacant since 2013 and at the time of writing is the subject of local action to save it from possible demolition and conversion to housing.

[The Coronation Arms, St Mary Bourne](#) closed in December 2015 and at the time of writing is still closed. Oddly, this too is not part of Enterprise Inns but is understood to be owned by a local company.

Good news from Upton – the [Crown](#) reopened in September 2016 after an extensive refit. It now offers three real ales (some local), a good food menu and has absolutely nothing to do with Enterprise Inns.

[The George, Thruxton](#) was closed at the time of writing.

[The Clatford Arms](#) free house in Goodworth Clatford is now registered as a Test Valley Asset of Community Value.

Welcome to Charlie and Debs at the [Chestnut Tree](#), Weyhill Road, Andover, who took over in

September 2016. On the last the beers available were Greene King seasonal beers Oompah (brewed for GK Oktoberfest) and Gangly Ghoul in addition to the regular IPA and Abbot.

[The Town Mills](#) in Andover now has Cask Marque accreditation.

Out of Area

[The Poacher Inn](#) in Alton Road, South Wamborough reopened in June after a major refurbishment. Information from www.poacherinn.co.uk.

In Reading the [Monks Retreat](#) (JDW) ceased trading on 27th November 2016.

Better news from Reading: it was announced in November that the [Purple Turtle](#) is planning to open its own micro-brewery.

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First CAMRA meeting at Aldermaston Club

In September a North Hampshire Branch Meeting and Social was held at the Aldermaston Recreation Society. The 'Rec Soc' is a members' club providing a wide variety of sporting and social facilities.

In order to facilitate our visit it was agreed that we could enter as guests accompanied by a member and the skittle alley was reserved for the meeting.

There are two bars (essentially a lounge bar and a public bar/pool room) served by four shared hand-pumps which on our visit were dispensing the regular - Fuller's *London Pride* - alongside Adnams *Southwold Bitter*, Bombardier *Golden England* and Little London *Ash Park Special*.

An enjoyable time was had by all and thanks go to the Rec Soc for

accommodating us.

If you would like to know more about the Rec Soc (including membership), please contact the Club Secretary on 0118 982 7614

Michael Pitfield



The lounge bar at the club

Current CAMRA Local Pubs in our area

- Barley Mow, Oakley
- Bourne Valley Inn, St Mary Bourne
- Clatford Arms, Goodworth Clatford
- Derby, North Warnborough
- Eagle Inn, Abbots Ann
- Four Horseshoes, Sherfield-on-Loddon
- The Fox, North Waltham
- Fur and Feathers, Herriard
- Leather Bottle, Mattingley, near Hook
- Maidenhead Inn, Basingstoke
- Mill House, North Warnborough
- Northbrook Arms, East Stratton
- Odiham & Greywell Cricket Club
- Plough Inn, Little London near Silchester
- Prince Regent, Whitchurch
- Red Lion, Overton
- Rising Sun, Basingstoke
- Sun Inn, Dummer
- Watership Down Inn, Freefolk
- White Hart, Charter Alley
- White Hart, Over Wallop
- White Hart, Overton
- Wonston Arms, Wonston, Sutton Scotney
- The Woolpack Inn, Totford
- Y Knot Inn, Water End near Hook

Visit www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk to see the latest list with a map link

PUBLICANS: If you wish to benefit from participation in the North Hampshire CAMRA LocAle scheme you must agree to endeavour to ensure that at least one locally brewed real ale is on sale at all times. The term 'locally brewed' in this context refers to a beer brewed within 25 miles of the location of the pub/club, or from anywhere in Hampshire. Only real ale can be promoted as CAMRA LocAle. LocAle promotional material is provided to all participating outlets. The branch LocAle contact is Pat Hayward who can be contacted through *Beer Lines* on beerlines@camrahantsnorth.org.uk



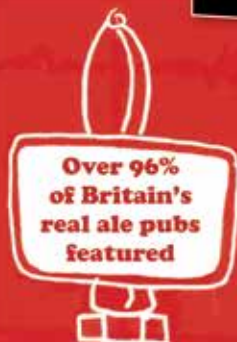
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What's Happening?

North Hampshire Branch Diary & other events

Thursday 19th - Saturday 21st January CAMRA Manchester Beer & Cider Festival at Manchester Central. (There will be a trade/CAMRA members only preview evening between 5pm and 9pm on Wednesday 18th January. This will incorporate a press reception.) Details from www.manchesterbeerfestival.co.uk

Friday 27th - Saturday 28th January Salisbury Winterfest XX, British Legion Club, Endless Street Salisbury. Details from www.salisburycamra.org.uk

Friday 3rd - Saturday 4th February 29th CAMRA Dorchester Beerex in association with the Dorchester Round Table. The Corn Exchange, Dorchester. Details from www.camrawdorset.org.uk/festivals

Tuesday 21st - Saturday 25th February CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival, Norwich - the home to hundreds of Real Ales, Ciders, Perries and International Beers. Details from www.nwaf.org.uk

Friday 24th - Saturday 25th February CAMRA Silver Jubilee Gosport Winterfest, Thorngate Halls Gosport. Details from www.psehcampa.org.uk

Friday 10th - Saturday 11th March Weymouth Sailing Club Annual Beer Festival. The Nothe, Weymouth
www.camrawdorset.org.uk/festivals

Friday 17th - Saturday 18th March CAMRA Wantage Beer Festival at Portway, Wantage OX12 9BY. Details from www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

Friday 18th - Saturday 18th March Winchester Real Ale & Cider Festival at the Guildhall, Winchester. Details from www.winchesterbeerfestival.org.uk

Friday 7th to Sunday 9th April CAMRA National Members' Weekend Bournemouth International Centre, Exeter Road, Bournemouth. Register at www.camraagm.org.uk

Events may well have changed since *Beer Lines* went to press. For up-to-date information please contact social@camrahantsnorth.org.uk or visit our main website www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk. If you would like to have your Real Ale-related event published here please contact the editor at beerlines@camrahantsnorth.org.uk for magazine deadlines.

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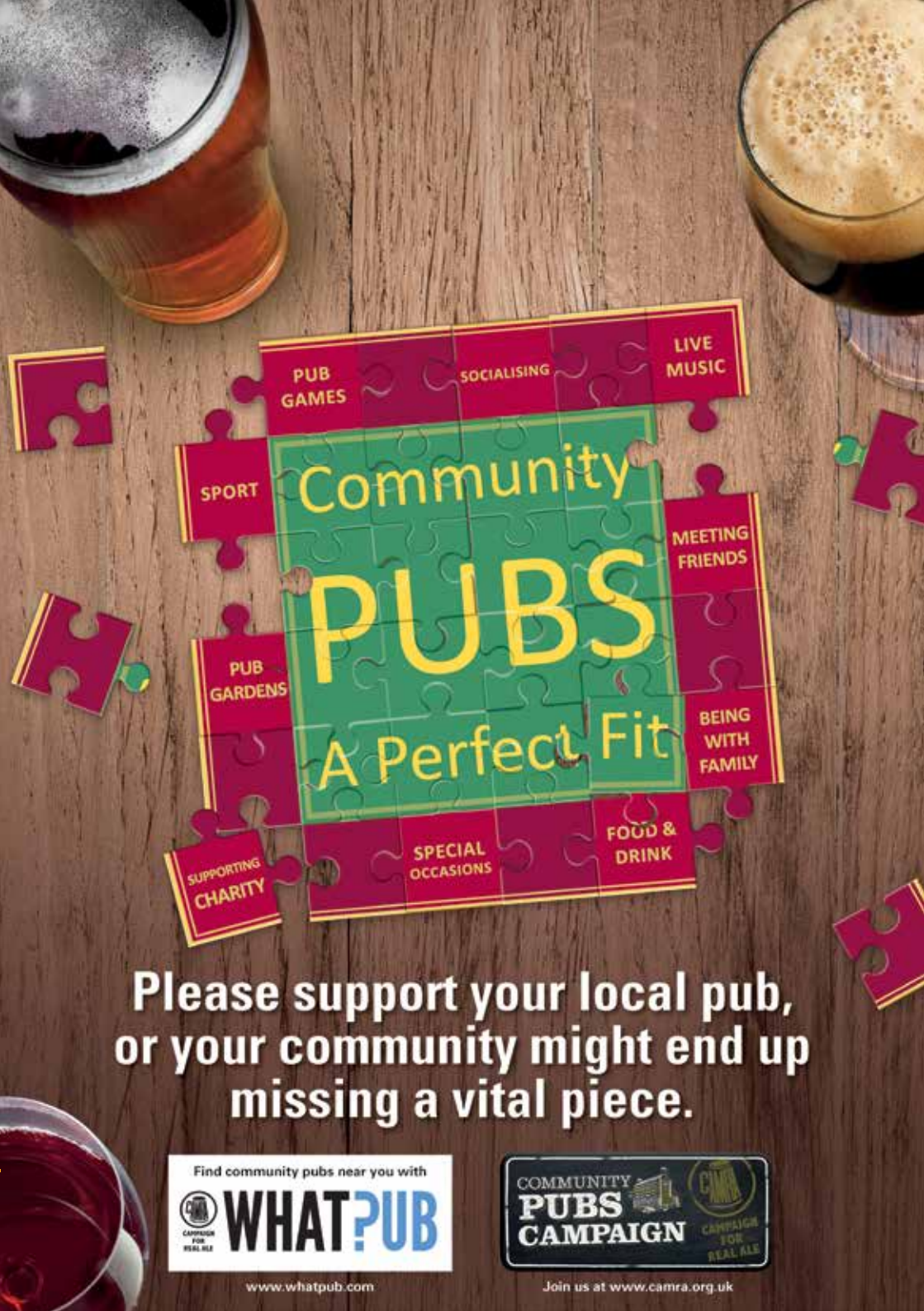
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Answers to Quick Quiz [on page 6]

1. Nor; 2. Pit; 3. X; 4. Inter; 5. Often; 6. Eleven; 7. Horse.
 The Manchester micro-brewery is PHOENIX.



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CAMRA Awards

Inside and outside the branch area

The Whitchurch Sports and Social Club received an award for 2016 North Hampshire CAMRA Club of the Year (West of Area) at a presentation on 5th November. Pictured is the bar manager Paul Driver (right), receiving the award from North Hampshire CAMRA chairman Mike Hodson. The club hosted a mini beer festival on the day featuring seven beers from Red Cat Brewing.



Whitchurch Sports & Social Club presentation

iconic **Bell**, Aldworth in Berkshire on 30th November 2016.

Little London Brewery has won the Silver medal at the 2016 CAMRA Tamworth Beer festival with their 2.0% **Type 2** beer which is brewed



Little London Brewery presentation

for drinkers who have been strongly advised to adjust their diets due to Type 2 Diabetes. The beer can also be enjoyed by all beer lovers. The award was made in November at the **Plough, Little**



Tutts Clump award presentation

London. Pictured is brewer/owner Andy Watts (left) receiving the award from Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth Branch member Ian Eason.

West Berkshire Brewery is delighted to announce that two of its flagship beers **Good Old Boy** and **Maggs' Magnificent Mild** have won Gold in the CAMRA London and South East Area Champion Beer of Britain awards. As **Good Old Boy** and **Maggs' Magnificent Mild** both won their categories they will also go forward to the Champion Beer of Britain finals which will be held at the Great British Beer Festival in August 2017.

The winning cider at OctoberFest was **Tutts Clump Special Reserve Dry Cider**. Pictured is branch chairman Mike Hodson (left) with cider maker Tim Wale, receiving his award at the

CAMRA Discounts

The following outlets provide discounts to card-carrying CAMRA members:

Odiham & Greywell Cricket Club, Odiham:
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The White Hart, Hook:
20p off a pint; 10p off a half pint

The White Hart, Whitchurch:
50p off a pint; 25p off a half pint

Basingstoke Sports & Social Club:
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The Cider Binn

Cider in the New World – the Antipodes



Cider production in Australia and New Zealand differs from the 'Old World' in that most of it is produced using eating apples rather than cider apples. This results in a lighter style with less complex flavours because of the use of low tannin apples. This tends to lead to a bland-tasting product which lacks the diversity of British traditional ciders. Cider makers also tend to use apple juice concentrate and added yeast rather than wild yeasts again leading to softer and simpler flavours. Over the past few years there has been a move to address this by planting orchards of traditional cider apples in order to improve the range of craft ciders in both countries.

Cider consumption in this part of the world is on the up, bucking the trend of an overall reduction in alcohol consumption, especially in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has recorded a drop of 15 per cent for total alcohol consumption but a doubling of cider consumption over the past five years. The annual revenue for the cider market in Australia is over \$300M. New Zealand has about half a million regular cider drinkers out of a 4½ million population.

The cider-producing regions of Australia and New Zealand are more or less the same as those for their wines. Hunter Valley in New South Wales, Yarra Valley in Victoria, Barossa Valley in South Australia and Marlborough in South Island New Zealand. Tasmania is also known for apple growing and cider production.

Australian Ciders

The *Batlow Cider Company* has been making real ciders in Batlow, New South Wales since 1922. Their production is mainly from local apples and only pressed apples are used, no added concentrates. There two main products are **Batlow Premium Cider** and **Batlow Cloudy cider**.

Matilda Bay Brewing Company started in 1984 in Freemantle, South Australia brewing small-run craft beers. They have now relocated to

a renovated Cadbury's factory site in Melbourne and in 2011 brewed their first cider, **Dirty Granny Matured Apple Cider**. This is a 5.5 per cent cider that is dark russet in colour.

New Zealand Ciders & Perries

The *Monteith Brewing Company* is located in Greymouth on the West Coast of the South Island. They make a **Crushed Apple Cider** and **Crushed Pear Perry**, both made from New Zealand fruit grown locally in Nelson NZ with no added concentrates.

Local News

The Cider of the Festival at this year's Basingstoke Octoberfest was Special Reserve from the excellent Tutts Clump Cidery near Newbury. There was a presentation to proprietor Tim Wale at the **Bell** at Aldworth on 30th November 2016.

Thanks to Andover member Peter Yarlett for this information on the **Abbotts Ann Cider company**: The *Abbotts Ann Cider Company* produces a 5.2 per cent cider under the name of *The DeCider*. It is made from culinary and desert apples collected locally. It is an Eastern/South Eastern style of cider, pale with not a lot of tannin content similar to Angus Whitehead's *Heart of Hampshire*. Apparently some Crab Apples were included in this year's pressing to add a little tannin.

Tony Binns



Tap takeover at Angel, Basingstoke

The end of November saw four days of Little Beer Corporation's draught and keg beers showcased at the Angel, Basingstoke (J.D. Wetherspoon). On two of the days either the brewer or assistant brewer was present to chat to interested beer drinkers. Too many beers to list here but the session beer Little Haka at 3.5 per cent represented one end of the strength scale and a 7.4 per cent 1917 Imperial Pilsner the other. There was even a beer brewed for the occasion called Little Angel. The event drew in many people and the Angel management considered it a successful venture, one that could well be repeated in the spring or summer.



Little Beer Head Brewer Jim Taylor (left) chatting to Wild Weather brewer Iain Clarke



Assistant brewer Paul Hutcheon

Photos: Jim Turner

The Northbrook Arms Steak Night



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Brewery News

Local brewery updates



Andwell Brewing Company

01256 761044

www.andwells.com

Trade has been good at the brewery, with a record number of tours being carried out towards the end of last year. A recent staff night out at the Inspire Business Awards saw the brewery walk away with an award for Family Business of the Year. The Brewhouse has been a little behind schedule with opening now planned for Jan 2017, this was due to various hold ups on the fit-out. This year looks like it will be an interesting and fun year with various new customers coming on-line as well as the addition of The Brewhouse. More information about The Brewhouse will be available online as it becomes available.



Betteridge's Brewery

07771 966058

www.betteridgesbrewery.co.uk

The brewery now has three main outlets for bottles: Rosebourne Garden centre/restaurant near Thruxton, Weyhill Farm Shop and the Inn at Home in Newbury. There is also a new outlet for casks - The Crown Inn at Upton. *Jenny Wren* and *Old Chap* have been going down very well there. The main event of 2016 was the Test Valley Business Awards. On 22nd September at a fantastic dinner in the 'Lights' Andover with speaker Chris Packham, the brewery was awarded the McCrimmon and Reid sponsored Winner in the Food and Drink category. A truly great evening was had by all and Betteridge's are very proud to have won it against some very strong opposition.



Little London Brewery

01256 533044

www.littlelondonbrewery.com

The brewery won the Silver medal at the 2016 Tamworth Beer festival with their 2.0% Type 2 brewed specifically for sufferers of Type 2 Diabetes. See page 14. *May's Bounty* 4.4% premium bitter originally brewed for the Basingstoke Sports and Social Club was well received at the recent OctoberFest. Ale tasting notes basically the same as for Ash Park Special (4.9% ABV).



Longdog Brewery

01256 324286

www.longdogbrewery.co.uk

At the time of writing, the Festive Season was already in full (early) swing and Lisa and Phil were booked up with various local events and Fayres as well as a flurry of brewery tours. The Christmas brew - *Ruddy Elf* was proving popular and bottling was in full flow too. A choice of six different bottled ales, including the 2016 *English IPA*, *Red Runner* and *Ruddy Elf* were all available from the brewery shop and various retail outlets and events. Phil was also brewing furiously to keep up with demand and to ensure plenty of stock was available to start 2017 with.

Phil and Lisa were very much looking forward to a few days well-earned rest between Christmas and the New Year to be in tip-top condition to start planning for the New Year's activities including several more brewery tours.



Mash Brewery

01962 795023

Twitter @ MashBrewery

www.mashbrewery.com

The brewery has been voted by the public as the Best Drinks Producer at Hampshire Farmers' Markets for 2016. Their beer is now regularly available in the 'Standing Order', Southampton and the 'Lord Palmerston', Southsea. You can still get *Mash Pale*, *Copper* and *Amber* from the Southern Co-op Local Flavours Range. Christmas sales were great from the brewery and numerous markets across Hampshire, plus the occasional Mash-run bar. Check out the website or our Twitter and Facebook feeds for the most up-to-date information.



Sherfield Village Brewery

07906 060429

www.sherfieldvillagebrewery.co.uk

For the fourth consecutive year, SVB played host to students of Reading University Real Ale Society for a brew day in December. Information on the beer is now available on the brewery website.



Wild Weather Ales

0118 970 1837

www.wildweatherales.com

Late last year the brewery collaborated with champion home brewer Kevin Black to produce *Five O'Clock Somewhere!!* a 7.5 per cent Oatmeal Stout. Re-branding of the *Wild Weather* imaging is now well on its way, with artwork by Mark Bell of London punk band Mug. Before the end of December, two brewing collaborations were completed with London brewers Weird Beard.

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East Side Story

A winter walk in Reading

From the main rail station, Reading General, exit the front of the station, head to the left of the roundabout in front of the station then cross the road and head downhill. Turn right down Blagrove Street, past the Town Hall and St Laurence Church, go left down 'The Forbury', skirt round Forbury Gardens on your left, then either take a right through 'Abbey Gate' or proceed further and take the last path on the right. Either of these will eventually bring you alongside the Abbey ruins, and beyond the old Reading Gaol, its most famous inmate being Oscar Wilde. You are now within sight of the River Kennet.

With the river on your right and following the path under bridges and around 'Blake's Lock', you will reach the Bel & The Dragon bar/restaurant which also houses a riverside museum.

Walk around this (or stop and visit if it's open) then rejoin the river path. In the distance looms a gasometer.

Take the bridge

over the river straight up to Cumberland Road. Proceed to the main London Road and you will see Cemetery Junction to the left, and the now defunct Granby Tavern. Turn right, down London Road and where the road divides and you will see our first pub, the **Abbot Cook**.

On entering you will see a wide range of cask and keg ales available on the bar nearest you. Most of the interior is given over to dining although customers are not discouraged from partaking of drinks only. The permanent cask ale is Doombar with Timothy Taylor's *Landlord* and Purity Brewery *Pure Ubu* also appearing regularly. Two guest beers complete the range. On my visit there were Wychwood *Hobgoblin* and Adnam's *Ghostship*.



The Jolly Anglers

Sunday afternoons here are recommended for top drawer live jazz from 3–5pm and some amazing looking roasts. Mondays are Quiz Nights and on Tuesdays there is £1 off all draught beers.

Retrace your steps back to Cumberland Road but instead of crossing back over the bridge head to the towpath and turn left. Here you will find a cosy gem of a free house – the **Jolly Anglers**. This welcoming pub has for the last six years been run by John with his partner and son. There is a loyal customer base of drinkers and diners who mix happily ensuring a convivial atmosphere. Three real ales are always available – local and further afield. On my visit there was *Crazy Horse IPA*, *Piddle Premium* and *Quarterstaff*, an excellent stout from Lincoln Green Brewery in Nottingham. With regular live music nights, a suntrap of a garden and an annual beer festival in June, this hidden treasure is definitely a pub to watch.

Leaving the 'Anglers', turn left and a short distance down the towpath sits the **Fisherman's Cottage**, a complete contrast to the last pub. The 'Cottage' is large and bright with a contemporary feel. No surprise that this is a sister pub to the excellent 'Greyfriars' close to Reading station. Plenty of independent breweries represented here, including local ones. There are normally four ales on tap – Wild Weather Ales seems to be a fixture. Also available on my visit were beers from Alechemy and Cloudwater. Food is a strong feature here with Tapas a speciality.

It is now a simple stroll back along this side of the river to Reading Town Centre and loads more excellent hosteleries.

www.theabbotcookreading.co.uk

www.thefishermanscottagereading.co.uk

www.thejollyanglers.com

John Mcgarvey



The Abbot Cook

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