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beerlines

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

ISSUE 17 APRIL - JUNE 2017

The Waggon & Horses at Hartley Wintney. Now under new management, the pub is continuing to thrive with an excellent range of beers.
Photo by Brenda Cross



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- Bad Boy Pub Companies
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- ... & LOADS MORE

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Opening Hours: 9am – 5pm, Monday to Saturday

Branch Contacts

Editor:

Jim Turner

e: beerlines@camrahantsnorth.org.uk

Branch Chairman

Michael Hodson

e: chairman@camrahantsnorth.org.uk

Branch Secretary: Currently vacant

All officers can be contacted securely through our website (see below):

Publics and Clubs Officer - John Buckley

Membership Secretary - Brenda Cross

Branch Contact - Currently Vacant

LocAle Officer - Pat Hayward

Social Secretary - Currently vacant

Branch Treasurer - Doug Cross

Webmaster - Currently vacant

Web: www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk

Facebook: 'North Hampshire CAMRA'

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Trading Standards (Hampshire)

Montgomery House, Monarch Way, Winchester
SO22 5PW

t: 01962 833620 e: tsadvice@hants.gov.uk
www.hants.gov.uk

Campaign for Real Ale Ltd.

230 Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW
t: 01727 867 201 e: camra@camra.org.uk

www.camra.org.uk

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Studio Capital

First Floor, Central Buildings, Middlegate,
Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, NG24 1AG
t: 01636 302 302 e: hello@studiocapital.co.uk
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Editor's Shout

A warm welcome to you

Spare a thought for the small brewer who does business with SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers). SIBA's role, among other things, is to facilitate business between Pub Companies and breweries. Late last year SIBA announced a reduction in money paid to breweries of £5 per firkin (nine-gallon cask).

This has now been exacerbated by industry Bad Boys, Enterprise Inns reducing the price it pays for cask beer to members enrolled on SIBA's Beerflex direct delivery service by £3.00 per firkin.

So that's an £8 reduction, eroding an already tiny profit margin for most small brewers. In whose interests is SIBA (once the voice for 'small brewers') now operating? Interestingly, one of SIBA's members is Molson Coors, owner of Sharp's, brewers of the ubiquitous Doom Bar. Molson Coors is one of the world's largest brewing companies ...

Yet another blow for smaller brewers (and drinkers!) is the news that Pub Company Punch Taverns is to sell 1900 of its pubs to Heineken. Whilst Punch is not best known for allowing their publicans an unlimited choice of beers in their pubs, there is nevertheless a degree of flexibility and many Punch outlets do stock some interesting beers. Heineken however, are thought to be keen to push mainly their own portfolio of beers, possibly denying pubs the choice they once may have had under Punch. The deal has been referred to the competition watchdog.

Finally, sadly we are saying 'Goodbye' to Capital Media, our publishers for the last three years. During our time with Capital, Beer Lines won two awards for Best Magazine in the CAMRA Wessex area. We wish Capital all the best and our next issue will have a new publisher and a new look.

Cheers! Jim Turner

(Magazine Editor, North Hampshire CAMRA)

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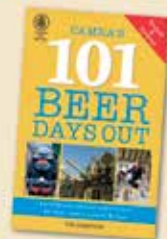


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Vibrant Forest

Share the Passion

Before 2011 Kevin Robinson was working full time at IBM near Southampton. In his house he had a one-barrel brewing plant in which he was brewing beers in his spare time and trying them out on his friends. They were so good he started getting demand to supply them to a wider market so he set up his microbrewery Vibrant Forest in July 2011.

By April 2012 the beers started to win awards; the first at the Winchester Beer Festival where I met him as he went to collect his certificate. He was basically gob-smacked as he had beaten some distinguished local brewers to win. He was still brewing out of his home but by then he had given up his full-time job and was producing a range of different beers.

In October 2012 four core beers made their first appearance at Basingstoke's Hampshire OctoberFest. His quality beers were starting to make waves and demand was growing so under pressure from his wife for the space and needing to expand, he moved to an industrial unit on the outskirts of Lymington on 31st October 2013.

At OctoberFest 2015 Kevin's beer Oat

and Coffee Stout won the Runner-Up Beer of the Festival award. A group from the CAMRA North Hampshire Branch attended his February Open Day and had pleasure in awarding Kevin the certificate. The Southern Hampshire branch was also there presenting an award from the Southampton Beer Festival. This year the same beer went one better and won Beer of OctoberFest 2016, so the certificate was

presented at a pre-Christmas Open Day, 17th December 2016 by Branch Treasurer Doug Cross. Being modest, Kevin arranged for his assistant Bruce Tucker to receive it, to recognise his contribution. The bar wall is adorned with awards and



Open Day at the brewery

Kevin told me one was due from London so by Christmas his beer had won 26 awards, seven of them for the 5.7% Oat and Coffee Stout. Where can you get this award-winning beer? It has been re-named Kick-Start and is now a core beer so keep an eye out.

Kevin's award-winning black beers continue to excite - the *Black Oktober*, an Imperial Russian Stout at 9.0% is to savour. He acquired some wooden rum, whisky and bourbon barrels early last year and has been ageing this stout in the



Assistant brewer Bruce (left) receiving his award from Doug Cross

barrel. I was fortunate to drink the rum-infused one on a visit. There is also a 6.0% India Black Beer, called *Metropolis*. A new beer, *Umbra Abyss* has just been brewed weighing in at a mighty 11.0%. All Vibrant Forest beers are unfiltered and unfiltered, so educating drinkers that a hazy beer is not a bad beer has been a mission.

The brewery has a pleasant bar; brewery tours by appointment plus you can go and enjoy a pint when it is open on Fridays 12pm to 6pm and Saturdays 11am to 3pm. They also hold Open Days – usually February (with the brazier outside attracting the hardy drinkers!). This year Kevin has been co-brewing with two small Italian breweries and fans will be happy to know the next Open Day is on April 15th to celebrate the brewery's third birthday. With 14 beers available everyone should find something to tickle the taste buds.

Brenda Cross

www.vibrantforest.co.uk
cheers@vibrantforest.co.uk
 01590 681094

CAMRA's Key Campaigns

- Stop tax killing beer and pubs
- Secure an effective government support package for pubs
- Encourage more people to try a range of real ales, ciders and perries
- To raise the profile of pub-going and increase the number of people using pubs regularly

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

Basingstoke Sports & Social Club:
 Club members' rates

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All pictures by
John Buckley

The Localism Farce

The Lamb at
Basingstoke

We the people have no say on pub closures

Again and again we hear of another pub being planned for demolition to be replaced by housing, and again there is something missing – there is no application for a Change of Use approval that would allow users and local communities to have a say.

In an era of so-called 'localism' this is a loophole in the Planning Law that the MPs who cover our area of North Hampshire have actively voted against closing, a situation condemned by those who support the importance of the pub as part of the social fabric of our communities.

It is a loophole that allows the Pub Companies (PubCos) to run pubs into the ground, creaming off the life savings of hard-working publicans, removing the essential community and social benefits of the pub, all the time knowing they can change it into a convenience store or bookmakers overnight. Or demolish it.

In Basingstoke there are few real traditional

pubs left. The Lamb is one and has recently been allowed to fall into neglect with little investment by the owner. An application to demolish has been submitted, again bereft of any need to apply for a Change of Use. Plans are for housing, and while Basingstoke Heritage Society are fighting to at least keep the building, it seems Basingstoke Council may roll over as they try to meet government imposed housing targets – yes the same government of which our MPs are part.

Meanwhile rumours abounded over the Lunar Hare in Andover, owned by the notorious PubCo Enterprise Inns. Formerly the 'Railway Tavern', this pub was turned around by the publicans from an ordinary drinking pub into a fine community-focussed asset, catering for all from family groups to charity fundraisers, all without losing its place within our nation's pub heritage. Then it suddenly closed with the landlord bankrupted. Enterprise claimed to seek another publican but the pub did not appear on their website. Rumours remain. Let's hope it is not still at risk and the new publicans of The Malt House (its new name) are given a chance. Arguably one of the worst examples is another Lamb – the Lamb Inn in

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 an **iconic beer named by a ferrous miss from the big Stockport Brewery**

1. House and All Hours
2. Colour and fruit
3. Herd of lions' arrogance
4. German red decay
5. Joe and Square
6. Put on 3 points in rugby
7. Encourage an ovoid

Brenda Cross

The Lunar
Hare, Andover


Andover. This historic traditional pub, named after the Holy Lamb, the Arms of the Knights Templar Inn, was sold by brewers Wadworth to the BeWiser insurance company who turned it into a staff canteen. No planning permission was needed to do so. However use of the residential part for an office does require permission. We shake our heads as the pub remains inaccessible.

The present law defies logic, as do the actions of the MPs who cover our North Hampshire area – Kit Malthouse MP, Rani Jayawardena MP and Maria Miller MP, who all voted to maintain this ludicrous position. Some would argue they favour property developers above the communities they are

elected to represent. We cannot comment!

I put the question to Kit Malthouse that a Laundrette would require permission to change into a convenience store so why not a pub? "It's different" was all he could say and added that planning permission would impose an unnecessary additional constraint on a property owner. When asked if all planning requirements should then be dropped he was silent – the logic whooshed by.

This is no longer a fight to keep pubs, but a deeper one. It is a fight to allow local people to have a say on what happens where they live.

It is presently being denied – but the campaign for fairness continues.

John Buckley

(John is the North Hampshire CAMRA Pubs & Clubs Officer and was formerly Regional Director for the Wessex Region of CAMRA. He lives in Whitchurch and is Deputy Chairman of the town council there, but these are his own opinions)



The Lamb at Andover



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Bar Chat

News & gossip around the North Hampshire branch area

East of Area

The [Angel](#) in Basingstoke has now added Vibrant Forest to its portfolio of breweries. The beers made their first appearance in February with eight casks and five Keykeys of their excellent beers.

In Hartley Wintney, the [Waggon & Horses](#), now under new licensee Kaesy Steele, is understood to be thriving and serving some cracking beers - Red Cat and West Berkshire to name but a few.

Beers available at the newly opened [Mole](#), Monk Sherborne were, at the time of writing, Little London Red Boy and West Berkshire Good Old Boy.

The [Lamb Inn](#) Hackwood Road (a former Enterprise Inns pub) is still standing at the time of writing. There is a proposed demolition of existing buildings with the erection of new housing. While housing is needed, it is felt that there could be a better scheme which would involve converting the existing building – more appropriate to the Conservation Area.

At the time of writing the [Rising Sun](#) in Basingstoke is closed and has a 'Could you run this pub?' sign outside.

West of Area

Plans are afoot to build a new brewery near Charlton, Andover. Situated in the grounds of Foxcotte Manor the brewery is to be called Foxcotte Manor Brewery. More information will be published when we receive it.



In Andover the [Railway Club](#) closed in March, due, it is understood, to an excessive rent hike.

Also in Andover the [Globe](#), a Greene King pub,

has reopened.

The [Plough](#) Longparish is up for sale as a freehold at the time of writing.

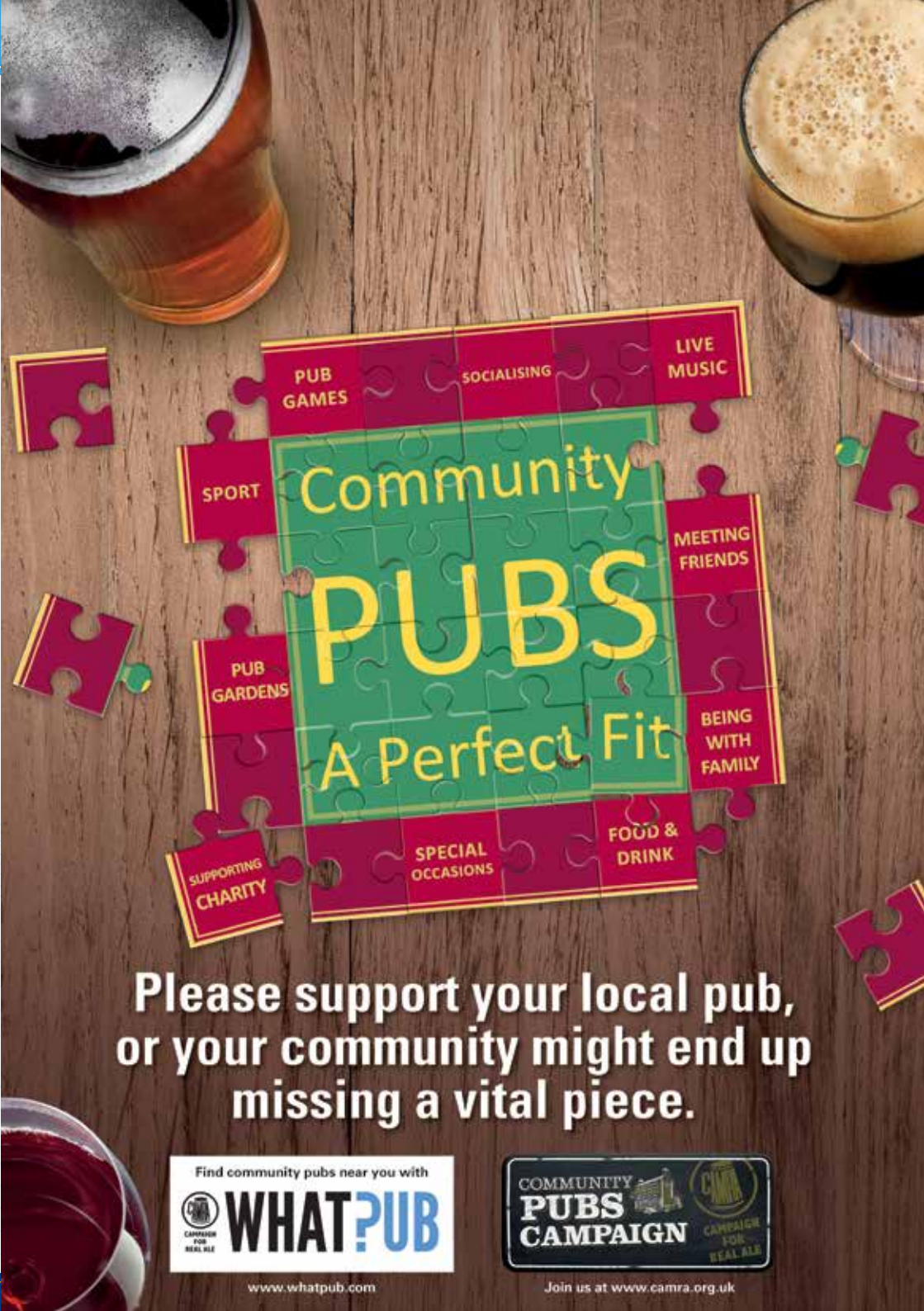
The [Five Bells](#) in Nether Wallop closed its doors in 2013. The landlord closed the pub after the residents of the village had it listed as a Community Asset. Whilst it remains closed the village has formed a Community Benefit Society which has a viable business plan, and sufficient pledged finance, to buy it at its current market value. The owner is currently not selling. You may ask why. There is a petition: <https://www.change.org/p/test-valley-brorough-council-save-nether-wallop-s-grade-ii-listed-five-bells>

Out of Area

The [Black Horse](#) in Church Crookham, Fleet Hampshire has reopened under licensees Mark and Carol who also run the [Royal Oak](#) in Knaphill. They plan to have up to four Real Ales plus (to be confirmed) a Cider & Ale festival later in the year. Their food menu will be the same in both pubs.

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What's Happening?

North Hampshire Branch Diary & other events

Friday 7th – Sunday 9th April

CAMRA Members' Weekend 2017 at Bournemouth International Centre. Details from www.camraagm.org.uk

Thursday 13th – Sunday 16th April

26th Egham Beer Festival at Egham United Services Club. Details from www.eghambeerfestival.co.uk

Saturday 15th April

Vibrant Forest Brewery Open Day. Contact brenda.cross@ntlworld.com

Friday 21st – Saturday 22nd April

'Firkins and Fizz' festival at St Mary's Hall, Overton. Twenty-four beers, eight ciders ... and a dedicated Prosecco bar! Three sessions - Friday 21st April from 7:30pm, a lunchtime Saturday session 11:30-15:30 on 22nd April, and an evening session from 7:30pm on the 22nd. Food available at all sessions. Tickets £8 each session available from Overton Gallery in the High Street or the Old House at Home in Station Road. Online from www.overtonbeerfestival.co.uk.

Thursday 27th April – Saturday 29th April

Farnham Beer Festival at The Maltings. Jointly organised by CAMRA and Farnham Lions. www.farnhamlions.org/farnhambeerex

Thursday 27th – Sunday 30th April

Reading Beer & Cider Festival at Christchurch Meadows, Caversham. www.readingbeerfestival.org.uk

Saturday 20th May

Branch trip to Open Day at Red Cat Brewing, Winchester – contact brenda.cross@ntlworld.com

Friday 2nd – Saturday 3rd June

Alton Beer Festival at Alton College. info@altonbeerfestival.org.uk

Saturday 10th June

CAMRA North Hampshire Branch AGM at Town Mills, Andover. Meeting commences 12.00 noon.

Friday 9th – Sunday 11th June

Beer festival at Eagle, Abbotts Ann. Details from Alan or Kate on 01264 710339. <https://theeagleinn.wordpress.com>

Saturday 10th June

Twyford Beer Festival, King George V Playing Field, Twyford. www.twyfordbeerfest.co.uk

Thursday 15th June

'Beer Day Britain'. Help celebrate the UK's annual national beer day. From 7.00pm. www.BeerDayBritain.co.uk

Friday 23rd – Saturday 24th June

Southampton Beer Festival at Southampton Football Club, St Mary's Stadium, Britannia Road. info@southamptonbeerfestival.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 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.

Answers to Quick Quiz [on page 8]

1. Open; 2. Orange; 3. Pride; 4. Rot; 5. Root; 6. Try; 7. Egg.
 Answer: the beer name is **TROOPER**.

Bad Boy Pub Companies

No.1: Enterprise Inns

Make no mistake – with few exceptions, pub companies are not brewers. They are property-owning conglomerates, some with apparently little love for, or interest in, British pubs, other than as cash cows. There are many pub companies in the UK and not all fall into the 'bad' category. But Enterprise Inns is right up there at the top of the dung heap. At their peak, Enterprise had over 9000 pubs but over the years the company has 'disposed' of many of them reducing their estate now to around 5000 outlets. It is understood there are plans to dispose of many more in the years to come. Having borrowed heavily to fund its early operations, Enterprise found itself heavily in debt and so started disposing of some of their pub estate, selling them off as flats,

supermarkets, car parks, betting shops and so on.

Inevitably pub licensees are finding they have to price their wares accordingly, making their businesses less affordable to pub users. Many then go out of business and those pubs that Enterprise deem worthy of continuing to exist are then advertised initially at low rents and low beer prices to attract new licensees into the trap. In the trade this is called 'churning', a disgusting term that describes how pub companies play fast and loose with people's lives.

In February the long-serving licensee of the popular and successful Leopold Tavern, Southsea – the local CAMRA branch's Pub of the Year – was forced to close after Enterprise hiked up the rent from £32,000 to £50,000 per annum!

Enterprise Inns have now changed their name to 'Ei Publican Partnerships' but many Enterprise licensees will tell you that the word 'Partnership' is a misnomer. It is nothing of the kind.

The British pub as an institution is facing a crisis from many sources but responsibility for a large part of this can be laid at the foot of Enterprise Inn's door. So, they thoroughly deserve their position of Bad Boy No. 1.

The Angry Campaigner



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May is one of two CAMRA cider promotion months so make the best of it by visiting some of the following hosteleries. Most are on National Cycle Route no. 4 and many have a local railway station with links to Basingstoke. All of them serve real cider and are close to the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Newbury

The Catherine Wheel, 35 Cheap Street, Newbury, RG14 5DB

There is always a good choice of cask beer and a selection of up to six perries and ciders. The ciders are usually from bag-in-box behind the bar, so are served at room temperature. The Catherine Wheel regularly has beers from Basingstoke's Longdog Brewery.

Cow and Cask, 1 Inches Yard, Newbury, RG14 5DP

This is a small and friendly micro pub in the old Newbury fishmongers. Thankfully the bar now smells of beer and not fish. There are usually three local ciders on sale, usually one from Tutts Clump and often a fruit cider as well.

Hungerford

John of Gaunt, Bridge Street, Hungerford, RG17 0EG

This is a very food centred pub with a small area for drinkers. Up to six cask beers and four ciders and perries are on offer and the choice is constantly changing. Beers usually include an offering from nearby Ramsbury brewery as well as the pub's own microbrewery. The ciders are stored in a fridge so are served cool.

Three Swans Hotel, 117 High Street, Hungerford, RG17 0LZ

Although a hotel this restored 17th century coaching inn has a public bar at the front and a comfortable lounge bar at the rear. The Three Swans serves cask beers and usually has a bag-in-box cider or perry from cider makers Tutts Clump.

Crofton

The Old Smithy, Crofton Beam Engines, Marlborough SN8 3DW

This is a pop-up bar at the historic Crofton Pumping Station. The bar serves three cask beers from the Kennet and Avon Brewery and also a real cider. Opening times are variable but the bar is normally open at the same time as the Pumping Station.

Honeystreet

The Barge Inn, Honeystreet, SN9 5PS

This is a quirky pub with an extra-terrestrial theme. The local crop circle gangs meet here to plan their nocturnal events in the local farmers' fields. The pub styles itself as 'the International Centre for crop circles'. One of the four regular cask beers locally brewed for the Barge is called Croppie. The Barge has three ciders and a perry on tap and often has a guest cider from Thatchers.

Pewsey

The Ale Shed, 20 North Street, Pewsey, SN9 5EX

The Ale Shed is a tiny pop-up bar that seats about 20 customers. It serves six cask beers and up to six real ciders and perries. The ciders are served directly from the cellar, rather than bag-in-box on the bar so are at a good temperature and in good condition. The opening times are limited so it is worth checking before you visit.

Coopers Arms, 37-39 Ball Road, Pewsey, SN9 5BL

This is a classic local style pub on the Eastern edge of Pewsey. It serves four cask beers – two regulars and two guests – and has a real cider on sale in the summer.

The Crown Inn, 60 Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5EL

This pub brews its own beers, branded 'Worlds End'. Up to six cask beers and two ciders are normally available.

Tony Binns

(Tony is a North Hampshire CAMRA member and cider drinker. He spends part of his time cruising the waterways on his narrowboat)

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- 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
- George Inn, Middle Wallop
- The Fox, North Waltham
- Three Cups, Stockbridge
- 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](mailto:BeerLines@camrahantsnorth.org.uk)

Brewery News

Local brewery updates



Andwell Brewing Company
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www.andwells.com

The new space at the brewery is really taking shape, with all the building work now finished and just a few snags to be sorted prior to being able to give an opening date. Hopefully by the time *Beer Lines* is in circulation the opening date will be on the website so please keep an eye on www.andwells.com for the information. The new meeting room will be able to cater for meeting up to 50 people so should you have any requirements please contact the brewery. The cafe space will also be available for private hire for groups up to 70, so suitable for parties of all types.

The bottled batch of *Porter* from last Christmas has now all gone (a lot quicker than the previous year!!), so this year's batch will be even bigger. A couple of pub group rotations are coming up with *Gold Muddler* and *Sovereign* so hopefully you will get to see them in pubs that aren't normally able to stock the brewery's beers. Later in the year a new beer *Summer Daze* will also be available through Punch 'Finest Cask' range. Plans are also taking shape for a new format 'Fun Day' at the brewery taking full advantage of the great space.



Betteridge's Brewery
07771 966058
www.betteridgesbrewery.co.uk

Betteridge's Brewery winds up its third and best year yet as a microbrewery with the Award of Food and Drink Producer of the Year in the Test Valley Business Awards. This created more interest in private and pub sales alike. The brewery remains focused mainly within the Test Valley although regular trips to The Royal Oak in Fritham provide

a wonderful dog walk at the same time. Mark and Jenny are now looking forward to the summer and the numerous Food & Drink festivals around the county and beyond. Recently the short spells of fine weather have increased sales of *Jenny Wren* whilst *Private Sector* has become a firm favourite in the George at Middle Wallop.



Little London Brewery
01256 533044
www.littlelondonbrewery.com

The brewery has now started to use Cascade Hops grown in the UK for some new ales.

Brewer Andy Watts is delighted to have one of these new Cascade hop-based ales targeted for availability in the House of Commons Strangers Bar.

Sad news to announce that a close friend of the brewery Matt Brown, whose illness was the main reason for their *Type 2* ale development, passed away at the tender age of 43 due to the acute effects of diabetes.

The newly opened Mole at Monk Sherborne now has the brewery's *Red Boy* ale.



Longdog Brewery
01256 324286
www.longdogbrewery.co.uk

The earlier part of the year saw a seasonal special - *Wobbly Whippet* - taking the place by storm. Another special will be out and about in April/May and will be a 6.2% Strong Porter based on an authentic 1850s recipe. This will appear at beer festivals and pubs throughout Hampshire,

and some will be bottled which will be for sale from the brewery shop and a number of retail outlets.

Some wonderful hops are making their way to the brewery this year, so there are plans for a number of other tasty specials (and *Wobbly Whippet* might well make another appearance). Brewery tours and customers visits continue to increase in popularity, with groups travelling from as far as Swindon to visit and sample the ales – get in touch if you'd like to visit for a brewery tour. Hopefully Phil and Lisa will also see you 'out on the road' at Meet-the-Brewer sessions they've been invited to by various pubs throughout the region.



Mash Brewery

01962 795023

Twitter @ MashBrewery

www.mashbrewery.com

Mash beers are now available in Lainston House hotel, Winchester. The brewery will be attending Hampshire Farmers' Markets in Winchester, Southsea, Alton, Odiham and Romsey again for 2017. They continue to expand the pubs supplied across Hampshire. If you are hosting an event large or small, from weddings through to food or beer festivals the brewery is happy to help. MASH can supply a range of beers in 72 pint firkins or 20 litre polypins complete with stillage to serve the beer from and jackets to keep it in tip top condition.



Sherfield Village Brewery

07906 060429

www.sherfieldvillagebrewery.co.uk

Sherfield Village Brewery is gearing up for a new season of beers, with some old favourites due to be brewed again in time for the Reading Beer Festival. *Best of Both Worlds* and *Amber* will return, along with at least one new beer.



Wild Weather Ales

0118 970 1837

www.wildweatherales.com

London's biggest Brewdog pub, in Shepherd's Bush, recently hosted a 23-tap takeover featuring beers from Wild Weather, three of which were brewed in conjunction with Weird Beard brewery.

Wild Weather has also brewed a beer with New Zealand brewery 'Yeastie Boys' which was launched at the recent ten-year anniversary party

in the Nags Head, Reading. The beer appeared alongside ones from Elusive and Uprising and many others.

There is a new collaboration with 'Bad Seed' brewery – *Great British Opaque Off* is a New England IPA and was launched at both Utobeers 'The Cage' and 'The Rake' in Borough Market, London.

Closer to home, JD from Bingham's is working at the brewery (he started in January). There is now an extension to the mezzanine floor, a seventh Fermenting Vessel and a new chilled unit for stock.

Beer Lines is online at
www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk

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A Woking Walk

Visiting pubs to the west of Woking



The Crown
Pic: Brian Bourne

Leave Woking train station by the 'town centre' exit. Once outside the station cross the road, take the path on the left – 'Church Path' – and at the end turn left then next right. Follow this all the way to the main road – Victoria Way. Use the pedestrian crossing to access the footbridge over the Basingstoke canal on the other side; carry on straight ahead to the next main road called appropriately 'Brewery Road'. Cross this road and take the path opposite into the woods with the Pegasus sculpture on your left. This path will take you over one road then eventually out by some flats and a school. Turn left here and with the graveyard of the nearby church on your left you will come out onto the start of Horsell High Street and two pubs facing each other – the Red Lion and the Crown.

The pick here is the latter, the **Crown** is a GBG (Good Beer Guide) regular and the unofficial tap for Thurstons Brewery situated pretty much next door. A Horsell beer is always on the bar – the Horsell *Gold* on my last visit

was in excellent condition and highly drinkable – along with up to four guests.

A real rarity in these parts, it is a wet-lead house with two bars – the right-hand bar being more of a lounge. The ale selection can be seen on this side – with TV and a fire; the left-hand bar is a mix of standing and seating – with TV, darts and a juke box. But conversation rules throughout (I chatted with John, one of the Horsell brewers, getting a good impression of this most local but very welcoming of places). With a Pool room to the rear and an extensive garden at the back including a Petanque pitch, this pub is a real focus for the village and its community – a gem!

Upon leaving turn to the left and up the High Street (watch out for a pair of vintage petrol pumps on your left) and at the top of the street the

footpath

ends. Switch to the right then back to the left and down Horsell Birch – you will now see our next pub.

A large food pub the **Cricketers** is very much a destination place, catering to large numbers of diners (a carvery was in full swing the Sunday I popped in) but there are a few tables at the front to sup a pint – I tried Shepherd Neame *Bishops Finger*. This may be the place to stop for a bite but on a Sunday, booking would be advisable.

On leaving the pub a footpath will take you across one road and up to the main road – in front will be Squires Garden Centre – turn left here for a 20-30 min walk along a busy road – but there is a footpath and the next pub is definitely worth it!

Eventually on the right at the bottom of Anchor Hill will appear the **Royal Oak**, another GBG regular and former local branch Pub of the Year too. It's not hard to see why, with up to five guest beers and up to seven real ciders. Carol and her team provide a congenial atmosphere where food is served in a separate area from the main bar which is very much a drinking and talking place. There is a large garden to the rear that is utilised for beer and cider festivals for local charities with BBQ and live music (the next one is scheduled for 12-14th May). Another pub not to be missed.

At this point one could head back to Woking or alternatively head up the hill to Knapthill where there are several pubs – I tried the Crown where after a pint of Timothy Taylor's *Golden Best* the landlord brought on locally-brewed Tillingbourne's *Falls Gold* – which was excellent, fresh as a daisy and very tasty indeed

From here it's possible to catch a bus – a decent service operates between Brookwood and Woking train stations – if you don't fancy the walk back.

John Mcgarvey

(John is a local CAMRA member and also a fine musician. His band – Johnny Marvel's Blues Groove – will be playing at the Royal Oak Beer Festival on Saturday 13th May.)



The Cricketers
Pic: Brian Bourne

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