Cider at the Catherine Wheel

Warwick Heskins took over the refurbished Catherine Wheel in June 2014. He was keen to stock a variety of local beers and ciders and paid Enterprise Inns a premium for access to bottled drinks from any source. The pub’s draught cider range is influenced by his dislike of ‘mainstream fizzy pretend cider’.

On 20 October, Tim Thomas presented the branch Cider Pub of the Year award to Warwick and Pauline at the Catherine Wheel.

Local cidermakers who supply bottled ciders to the pub, Tim Wale (Tutts Clump), Nick Edwards (Ciderniks) and Rick Wyatt (Wyatt’s Craft Cider), on the right of the photo, brought cider samples along for a tasting session.

Andy Pinkard (left) said it was good to see a discount on real ale and cider for CAMRA members. Rod Holmes (rear) said that with its big variety of draught and bottled ciders, the pub was at the core of Newbury’s cider scene!

After the presentation, customers enjoyed sandwiches filled with gammon that Warwick had cooked earlier, using Tutts Clump Jazz cider to add extra flavour.

Draught ciders at the Catherine Wheel are usually supplied from Herefordshire by Westons and from Somerset by Thatchers and Orchard Pig. For a Cider Week, starting the previous day, Warwick obtained additional draught ciders by Tutts Clump (Jazz), Ciderniks (Ten Years After), Salt Hill Cider (Autumn Gold) and Aspall (Cyderkyn).

Other pubs in West Berkshire stocking a range of draught real ciders include: Five Bells, Wickham (2014 Cider Pub of the Year); Bell Inn, Aldworth; John O’Gaunt, Hungerford; Hatchet Inn, Newbury and Cow & Cask micropub, Newbury.

Jeff Evans hosted a beer tasting event at Inn at Home, Newbury, on 6 November to launch his latest CAMRA book ‘So you want to be a Beer Expert?’.

The event saw Jeff give guests a flavour of what the book is about, leading them through a tasting of five beers, representing five different styles – Paulaner Original Münchener Hell, Cheddar Goat’s Leap, Weihenstephaner Hefe Weissbier, Orval and a Bristol Beer Factory Milk Stout – exploring how each beer was made and how the ingredients and processes determined the colour, aroma and flavour of the beer in the glass.

If you missed this event, these beers and Jeff’s book – which is packed with information, tips, advice and ideas for experiments to try and places to visit – are available at Inn at Home.

Answer questions below to win a copy of ‘So you want to be a Beer Expert?’ by Jeff Evans.

1) In which country do the hop varieties Cascade, Centennial and Columbus originate?
2) Thwaites Nutty Black, Brains Dark and Moorhouse’s Black Cat are three examples of which beer style?
3) In which country was the first golden lager produced, in 1842?

Email editor@westberks.camra.org.uk subject ‘Beer Expert’ with correct answers by 15 Jan 2016 to enter prize draw. Branch officials are excluded. Results in Spring Ullage.

ON OTHER PAGES
- Swift Halves - Pub and brewery news
- Swift Halves, Good Beer Guide launch
- More Swift Halves, LocAle
- West Berkshire Brewery, Gig Guide
- Betteridge's Brewery
- Longdog Brewery, Inn at Home
- Cider making in West Berkshire
- Oxford Pubs, 100 micropubs
- CAMRA Membership, Beer scoring
- Hampshire Downs Hike, Curmudgeon
- Diary Dates, CAMRA Contacts

Tutts Clump Cider Open Day
Kevin explained that brewing of Ammo Belle has stopped as he cannot obtain further Citra hops from the USA due to stock shortages. Three pubs in Wantage stock Indigineous beers. In Newbury, the Cow & Cask micropub and Inn at Home are further outlets.

Kevin mentioned that he is expecting his local pub, the Ibex, Chaddleworth, to reopen by Christmas 2016. www.indigenousbrewery.co.uk

West Berkshire CAMRA invites supporters to our Christmas Party in the Bacon Arms (Highwayman’s Bar) on Wednesday 16 December (7.30pm).

The branch has ordered a buffet. There will be a raffle for Campaign funds with plenty of prizes to be won. The highlight of the evening will be a fun, general knowledge quiz hosted by Jeff Evans. The main quiz is free to enter with additional spot prize rounds (£1) for bottled beer prizes.

West Berkshire CAMRA thanks contributors, distributors, advertisers, publicans and readers for their support of Ullage during 2015 and wishes you - Merry Christmas and a Happy Hoppy New Year!

Yule Fuel is the West Berkshire Brewery Christmas special beer, available in bottle (5% ABV) and on draught (4.3% ABV). Yule Fuel is a rich and hearty winter ale brewed using all English ingredients. Deep red in colour, it has plenty of caramel sweetness to balance a full berry-fruit hop flavour with raisin and liquorice overtones.

Richard Marshall, Hermitage Brewery, reports that Lodestone mild went very well at the 22nd Egham Beer Festival, hosted with the assistance of North Surrey CAMRA at Egham United Services Club. The latest beer from Hermitage Brewery is Frostbite, a 3.8% ABV pale ale with plenty of hop flavour, for supply to the Cow & Cask micropub. Hermitage Brewery bottled beers are available from Inn at Home. www.hermitagebrewery.co.uk

Ramsbury Brewery have released Red Velvet 4.6% ABV, a smooth rich red winter ale laced with American hops. Christmas Cracker, 4.1% ABV is described as light and hoppy with a refreshing taste. Other seasonal ales to look out for are: Festive 4.7% ABV, a chestnut coloured ale; Rum Truffle 5.6% ABV, laced with rum and spices and Grand Slam 4.3% ABV, a golden-amber coloured beer brewed to coincide with the Six Nations rugby union tournament. www.ramsburybrewery.co.uk

West Berkshire CAMRA AGM, Oktoberwest bierfest and recent membership of the Worshipful Company of Brewers on page 5. www.wbbrew.com

Richard Scullion led a visit by CAMRA members to Indigenous Brewery, Chaddleworth, on Saturday 21 November (photo page 6).

Kevin Brady, who started brewing in 2012, showed visitors around the 2.5 barrel capacity brewery. He provided samples of Old Cadger (Best bitter), Nutcracker (Brown ale), Frisky Mare (Blonde ale) and Nosey Parker (Dark ruby mild) from kegs; Double Warp (Double brown stout) and Nosey Parker (Dark ruby mild) from mini-keg. Kevin explained that brewing of Ammo Belle has

With artwork supplied by Jme Holmes from Newbury, this will be the first Wild Weather beer in 330ml cans. A collaborative beer with Uprising (Potel 7.5% ABV Stout and DIPA ) and Hopcraft (Sunday Mousse Warning 6.5% ABV 5.5% ABV Red IPA).

Recent beers have included collaborations with Welsh breweries: Waen (Message in a Bottle 7.5% ABV Stout and Mousse Warning 6.5% ABV DIPA ) and Hopcraft (Sunday Mousse Warning 6.5% ABV 5.5% ABV Red IPA).

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James Hussey has been visiting pubs in West Berkshire and writing posts about them for the Eat Drink Great Events blog and website. On 22 October, James visited the Queens Arms, East Garston for an Open Day organised by new landlords Freddie and Sue Tulloch. This featured a tour of new facilities that include 12 en-suite bedrooms, the adjacent Queens Lodge venue and a private estate. James wrote: 'The bar area has character and traditional pub appeal with an open brick fire place, wood flooring, local real ale and welcomes dogs.'

James attended the beer and food matching event at the Winterbourne Arms on 23 October. The pub now stocks an expanded range of bottled beers. Landlady Jan Simpson, arranged a further matching event on 4 December saying: 'Trying some of the diverse range of global beer styles is fantastic fun - with or without food.'

San Frinncisco is the first bottled beer from the INNnormal brewery based at the Five Bells, Wickham. The 5.9% ABV West Coast IPA will also be available at the John O'Gaunt, Hungerford and Inn at Home, Newbury. There are also plans to bottle INN Deep, a chocolate stout.

Congratulations to the Hare & Hounds at Speen, winner of the Independent restaurant or pub award in the 2015 West Berkshire Business Awards. Jonathan and Jean Nelsey said: 'We are proud to have achieved so much with the help of all our fantastic staff and loyal customers!' on their 10th anniversary as owners of the hotel on 25 October. www.hareandhoundshotel.net

Mary and Bernard at the Swan Inn, Inkpen welcomed Kristina and Gabriel to their team in October. Butts Traditional and Jester organic beers are usually available. The pub will close for a winter break from 23 December (2pm) until 3 February (noon). www.thewaninn-organics.co.uk

The Hind's Head, Aldermaston, a restored 15th Century coaching inn with 15 boutique bedrooms, has reopened after recent refurbishment, under the watchful eye of manager, John McKay. The Fuller's pub has retained its traditional quirks, but a few modern touches, create a light and airy space. www.hindsheadaldermaston.co.uk

Despite Two Cocks Brewery being put up for sale in September, brewing continues as usual. A new cask ale is 1643 Royalist, a seasonal 4% ABV dry hopped golden ale, originally brewed for the Mars Otter 50 beer festival. The brewery website has been updated with new photos. www.twococksbrewery.com

On 23 September, it was warm enough for guests at the Newbury launch of CAMRA's 2016 Good Beer Guide to pose outside the King Charles Tavern for a photo. Landlord Joshua Khan, pictured prominently below in waistcoat and glasses, was proud to see his pub in the Guide during his first year as a landlord. Nick Arkell, brewers Chris Butt, Will Twomey (West Berkshire) and Kevin Brady (Indigenous) stood behind publicans featured in the Guide for the photo. See page 10 for Good Beer Guide information.

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The Tally Ho, Hungerford Newtown; The Ibex, Chaddleworth and The Old Boot, Stanford Dingley are among six pubs in our branch listed as Assets of Community Value (ACV). The CAMRA website gives details of how a local group of 21 people or a Parish Council can nominate a pub as an ACV to protect it from demolition or conversion to another use.
More Swift Halves

- The Plough, Bicester, is Joshua Khan’s second Greene King Local Hero pub with 50% of cask ale free of tie. Refurbished and now also featuring a large local map on the ceiling it offers ten handpumps and an improved menu. Some King Charles Tavern regulars enjoyed a trip to the Plough on 14 November during its opening period and were thoroughly impressed.

- Mark and Kirsty from the Bull at Theale have taken over at the Lion, West Street, Newbury from Tony and Sarah who have moved to Calne. The Lion pub quiz continues weekly on Thursdays at 8.30pm, now hosted by Mark, Matt and Jodi. The kitchen at the Wadworth pub has reopened with food including wraps, burgers and salads. Football matches are screened on TV via Sky Sports and BT Sport.

www.thelionatnewbury.co.uk

- Remember, a red ale, was brewed by Eastbury Brewing Co in support of the Royal British Legion. Many Clouds, a 4.3% ABV brown ale was brewed in honour of the 2015 Grand National winner, trained in the Lambourn Valley and is described as ‘an ideal winter warmer for the National Hunt season’.

www.eastburybrewingcompany.co.uk

- The Eastbury Plough is a good pub to find a beer from Eastbury Brewing Co. A loyalty card scheme (1 pint free - every 10 pints) for ale and cider has been introduced.

www.eastburyplough.com

- 22 people attended a meeting at Hamstead Marshall village hall on 3 November concerning the future of the White Hart Inn which closed on 11 September. Since then a petition with 99 signatures has been collected objecting to the planned change of use from a public house to 4 dwelling houses (West Berkshire Council planning ref 15/0272/FULD). On 21 November, The White Hart Action Team facebook page reported that ‘the application for change of use has been held in abeyance until February 2016, when the required marketing period of six months has passed. This gives us some more time to plan ahead to try and save the pub’.

- Reports indicate that the Bladebone Inn, Chapel Row, will reopen early in January with new tenants.

- A Christmas market will be held in the grounds of the historic Arkell’s Brewery, Kingsdown, Swindon on Saturday 12 December. Note that the brewhouse will not be open to the public during the fair.

- Originally from Dresden, Markus Wagner is now Head Brewer at Siren Craft Brew, Finchampstead. He has seven years of brewing experience with Radeberger Exportbier Brauerei, Firestone Walker Brewing Co and Camden Town Brewery. Markus said ‘I intend to carry on the exciting work and creativity that Siren are known for while bringing some of my own philosophy: brewing clean, crisp and consistent beer in a great environment.’ www.sirencraftbrew.com

- Dinner for Nine and Dinner for Ten are the final collaborative Vienna Pale Ales brewed at Siren Craft Brew with Elusive Brewing.

- Results of the 2015 Oxfordshire beer of the festival judging at Oxford in October: 1. Turpin, Golden Citrus; 2. Lodden, Reading Best; 3. Thame, Mr Sploge’s Mild.

- Carpenter’s Arms, Burghclere - Andy & Julie Moss with Arkell’s Brewery managing director George Arkell:

In North Hampshire, Andy & Julie Moss have taken over at the Carpenter’s Arms, Burghclere, owned by Wiltshire brewery Arkell’s. Andy has been running pubs for 15 years starting at the Swan Inn, Newtown. Andy said I’ve wanted this pub for years, but it doesn’t come up very often, so when the previous landlords Ian and Christine Chipperfield decided on a career move overseas I was determined that this time, the new pub landlord was going to be me’. He added ‘It’s a great pub with a great vibe and my aim is to continue to provide them with a proper pub atmosphere and drive forward quality pub food.’
West Berkshire Brewery AGM & Oktoberwest

On Saturday 19 September, the second Annual General Meeting of The West Berkshire Brewery Company PLC was held in Yattendon. On a fine sunny day, the Tithe Barn, behind the Village Hall, was the venue for the AGM followed by the first Oktoberwest beer festival.

Pints of Good Old Boy were available for shareholders arriving for the AGM at 10am. From the stage, flanked by fellow directors, David Bruce, the company chairman, conducted the meeting and reviewed business performance. Beer output has increased due to impressive increases in bottled and draught sales and the addition of 'non conflict' Renegade Brewery brands like West Coast Pale Ale and India Session Ale. David mentioned that £2.5 million of new equity capital had already been raised under the Enterprise Investment Scheme. These funds will allow a visitor centre and packaging plant to be sited in the furthest two bays of the former dairy buildings at the brewery’s current base in Frilsham Home Farm, Yattendon, providing West Berkshire Council planning department approve.

Questions from the floor were answered by David Bruce, CEO Simon Lewis, Finance Director Tom Lucas and Head Brewer Will Twomey. In a question about possibly selling off the new Renegade Brewery brands, Derek Legg, also known as Catweazle on account of his long beard, urged that the traditional heartland of cask conditioned beers should be kept going. Derek, from Middlesex, a long time member of CAMRA, who has held various positions within the Society for Preservation of Beers from the Wood (SPBW) described the first AGM, including background on David Bruce and West Berkshire Brewery, in an entertaining article published in issue 132 (November 2014) of the quarterly SPBW publication ‘Pint in Hand’ which is available online: www.spbw.com/magazine/PiH%20132.pdf

After the AGM, directors and staff changed into Bavarian clothing and Die Dorf Fest Kapelle ticket holders began arriving for the 'sold out' festival. They enjoyed cask and keg beers, brewed in Yattendon or Bavaria, outside on the lawn or inside the magnificent barn at tables strewn with hops.

At 5pm, Dave Maggs, the brewery's founder and original brewer, played guitar on stage as part of Musikissmo (Dave is pictured second left in the photo below). Don’t miss the next Oktoberwest bierfest on 24 September, 2016!

In October, the Worshipful Company of Brewers welcomed The West Berkshire Brewery into its membership of 48 international brewing companies.

This City of London Livery Company was established by a Royal Charter granted by Henry VI in 1438, although its origins as a Guild can be traced back to 1292.

The Royal Charter originally incorporated the brewers as 'The Wardens and Commonality of the Mystery or Art of Brewers of the City of London.'

David Bruce, Chairman of The West Berkshire Brewery, said 'I am delighted to be invited with Simon Robertson-Macleod to become a Liveryman of The Worshipful Company of Brewers. This enables our 20 year old Brewery to become a corporate member of an ancient brewing institution whose origins as a Guild stretch back over seven centuries.'
Betteridge’s Brewery

On a wet Saturday afternoon, thirty invited CAMRA members from three branches enjoyed an afternoon in the warmth of Cooper’s Barn, Hurstbourne Tarrant. Once an outbuilding of the Cooper’s Arms, a pub which burned down in 1904, the barn became the home of Betteridge’s Brewery in April 2014.

The full range of beers was available for sampling from casks on stillage at the far end of the barn. Private Sector (Best Bitter), Serious Black (Cream Stout) and Jenny Wren (Golden Ale) are all 4.2% ABV while Old Chap (Session Bitter) is 3.8% ABV.

When everyone had a glass of beer, Mark Betteridge told the story of the brewery which he started after retiring from the Army at 55. He described the 2.5 barrel / 400 litre capacity Brewmaster brewery as ‘wonderful kit’ and said output had doubled in the last year and is now around the right level.

Mark is the brewer and the drayman, delivering the beers that are suited to the rural surrounding area with the George & Dragon, Hurstbourne Tarrant and the Three Tuns, Great Bedwyn among outlets. His wife Jenny looks after sales and marketing and also caps the bottles that he fills with beer.

Mark thanked his suppliers including Nigel Hoppitt of SPAsoft brewery management systems, Warminster Maltings and Charles Faram the Worcestershire hop merchants. British hops are used in the beers except Jenny Wren which uses Nelson Sauvin from New Zealand.

Afterwards, Phil Myatt (North Hampshire CAMRA) presented Mark and Jenny with a CAMRA certificate for Jenny Wren, joint second in Hampshire Octoberfest 2015. In September, Old Chap won gold and Serious Black won silver at the Silchester beer festival.

Read more about Betteridge’s brewery in an article by Brenda Cross in Beer Lines (issue 9, page 9) available online via www.camrahantsnorth.org.uk

For stockists and more beer details visit www.betteridgesbrewery.co.uk

Jenny & Mark Betteridge

West Berkshire CAMRA visit to Indigenous Brewery - hosted by brewer Kevin Brady (wearing bright blue top - centre). Chaddleworth 21/11/2015
Ticket holders filled Inn at Home, Newbury on Wednesday 21 October for an evening talk and beer tasting. The Bartholomew Street shop’s co-owner, David Marklew, introduced Phil Robins who realised his dream of creating Longdog Brewery in 2011, after 25 years as a homebrewer.

The former employee of a local telecoms firm said that with funds available ‘it is easy to set up a brewery’. Based in Basingstoke, Phil opted for a 6 barrel plant, giving a capacity of about 960 litres per brew.

Phil multitasked by filling glasses with Bunny Chaser from a 5 litre box and talking at the same time but was soon relieved when Inn at Home’s Scott and Heather took over serving the beer. Phil explained that the 3.6% ABV session bitter was created accidentally as a weaker version of 4.2% ABV Brindle Bitter, Longdog’s first commercial beer, a best bitter that uses Challenger and Goldings hops. Although Phil doesn’t like Belgian beers, apart from some of the sour ones, he said ‘I love really hoppy beers’.

Having started brewing 3.9% ABV Golden Poacher with a lot of Green Bullet hops from New Zealand and 4.2% ABV Kismet with Nelson Sauvin hops (NZ), he subsequently found it impossible to source enough of these hops, so recipe changes were required. Golden Poacher now uses some Galena (USA) hops and Kismet now uses four American hops - Chinook, Summit, Bravo and Centennial.

Phil mentioned that he used to be a member of a west London home brewing club - Durden Park Beer Circle where pre-WWI beer recipes had been researched and trialled. Golden Poacher is based on a 1910 Fuller’s recipe - AK, which uses quite a lot of flaked maize.

Lamplight Porter, once brewed as a homebrew at 6.5% ABV, is based on an 1850 Whitbread recipe, although now adjusted to 5% ABV. Basingstoke water is ideally suited for brewing Lamplight Porter which has won multiple awards. Phil describes it as ‘the best porter I’ve ever tasted’.

The sixth and final beer to be sampled was 6% ABV India Pale Ale, served from 500ml bottles. Originally brewed for a wedding, only limited bottles remain of this hoppy traditional English IPA which Phil described as ‘quite a sweet beer’.

At 8.30pm it was time for David to thank Phil for his talk which was roundly applauded. Joking that Phil’s two children needed shoes and that Bob, his lurcher needed dog food, David offered customers a special 10% discount on purchases of Longdog bottled beers, which are only available from the Basingstoke brewery and Newbury’s Inn at Home.

www.longdogbrewery.co.uk
www.innathome.co.uk

Lia Olsborg is Cellarman at Aeronaut Brewing Co and NERAX (New England Real Ale Exhibition), a CAMRA member and a supporter of UK breweries.

She was pleased to receive Ullages from Tim Thomas who visited the Aeronaut taproom in Greater Boston on 15 November. For more details read Tim’s Aeronaut Brewing Co, Somerville, MA post on his USA blog: beerusa.blogspot.co.uk
Cider making in West Berkshire

Tim Wale (Tutts Clump Cider) and Nick Edwards (Ciderniks) make the most cider in West Berkshire. Together with Rick Wyatt (Wyatt's Craft Cider) they appear in the front page photo, taken at the Catherine Wheel, Newbury.

The autumn months are busy for cider makers as they gather apples and start the cider making process by washing the apples and scratting or milling them to produce pomace (apple pulp). A ‘cheese’ is built from layers of boards and wrapped pomace which is then pressed to give pure apple juice. The apple juice is then pumped into containers and fermentation begins.

Roy Bailey of Lambourn Valley Cider, Berkshire’s longest-established cider maker based in Great Shefford, took a break in 2014 but is also making cider again this year – his 20th since founding the company in 1995.

Unlike the other local producers, Roy uses a large basket press to extract the juice, and follows a technique used in Normandy to produce a slower fermentation.

Rick Wyatt and family harvest apples locally and rather than a hydraulically powered rack & cloth press, Rick uses a German made Hydro press that extracts juice by inflating a bladder which squeezes apple pomace against a perforated cylindrical enclosure with mains pressure water that is circulated via a pump so the water is recycled.

The juice is then fermented slowly over winter using naturally occurring yeasts and then bottled in early summer. Rick makes Berkshire Gold - a lightly sparkling medium cider and Abbey Gold - a West Country style cider using cider apple varieties which grow at Douai Abbey.

The photo above, taken at Ciderniks in Kintbury by Rod Holmes, shows a ‘cheese’ being built by Nick Edwards. Apple juice has already started running from the wrapped pomace into the tray below.

The adjacent photo, taken at the Tutts Clump Cider open day on 17 October, shows the pomace output on the left, a ‘cheese’ being pressed on the right and Tim Wale in the background making up another ‘cheese’.
Oxford Pubs

The Mason’s Arms, Quarry School Place, Headington, has won Oxford CAMRA’s Pub of the Year award four times, including 2014-15. Dave Richardson’s section on the Mason’s Arms in his book ‘Oxford Pubs’ includes the following information:

The pub is named not after the Freemasons but after the stonemasons who laboured in the quarries around here, supplying much of the stone used to build Oxford’s colleges until the 18th century. The present building dates from around 1900, and was constructed by Allsopp’s Brewery although later taken over by Halls.

It has been run by only four families since 1928. The Meeson brothers took over in 1997 and remain in charge today, keeping a very traditional pub that doesn’t serve food, is open only in the evenings except at weekends, and maintains darts, crib, Aunt Sally and bar billiards teams.

It is now a free house serving mainly locals and CAMRA members from near and far, with always a good selection of real ales on offer including some unusual choices. The Headington Beer Festival is held each September in a modern function room at the rear, while in the former outside toilets is a micro-brewery called... the Old Bog.

Dave Richardson, freelance journalist and editor of the Oxford Drinker, was at the Oxford Beer Festival in October, and posed for a photo with ‘Oxford Pubs’. His book features photographs and histories of over 40 Oxford pubs. It is available from bookshops and Amberley Publishing or contact coronation@aol.com for signed copies direct from the author (£14.99 incl p&p) – contact coronation@aol.com

100 Micropubs, 2000 Miles

On Friday 31 January 2015, Richard Reeve began his epic cycle journey, visiting 100 micropubs, at the one closest to his office - the Old Transporter Alehouse, Henlow, Bedfordshire.

Raising funds for Alzheimer’s Society he has devoted his weekends and holidays to cycling a carefully planned 2,000+ mile route.

On Saturday 22 August, Richard was greeted by landlord Ian Batho when he arrived at his 67th micropub - the Cow & Cask, Newbury. During his visit, customers treated him to beers, tapped from casks of XT Brewing XT3 IPA, Surrey Hills Ranmore Ale and West Berkshire Brewery Double Decadence.

Asked about his cycling experiences, Richard said that his bike had been troublefree except when in the vicinity of Dorking where it suffered from a broken chain and two separate punctures. Before leaving, Richard presided over a sweepstake which raised £70 for the charity. The next day would see Richard cycling through the rain to reach the Shed Alehouse, Pewsey and on from there to the Vaults, Devizes.

Ian Batho & Richard Reeve

Saturday 14 November marked Finale day - Richard’s Last Orders! Starting at the Long Pond, Eltham, he would stop at two micropubs, finishing appropriately at the Penny Farthing, Crayford, Kent.

Richard’s blog is a useful resource with details and photos of all the micropubs he visited - micropubbikeride.wordpress.com

Donations can be made at uk.virginmoneygiving.com/RichardReeveCycling
Scoring your beer

The Good Beer Guide (GBG), compiled by CAMRA branches throughout the UK, is the go-to reference to find pubs that have demonstrated excellent beer quality. The beer scores received for each pub are at the heart of the decision process as to which pubs will feature in the Guide.

The West Berkshire branch encourages all pub visitors to score their cask ales on quality. So whether you are a CAMRA member or not, please take time to score your beer and contribute to the Good Beer Guide selection process.

You can submit your score in several ways, look on westberkscamra.org.uk/survey for further details or login to the members area of whatpub.com

The scores are used to create a shortlist of pubs at the GBG selection meetings, held in January and February (refer Diary Dates - page 12), which are open to all CAMRA members. Final selection follows visits to the shortlisted pubs by members present at the selection meetings.

The GBG selection process is an effective and worthwhile way to participate in your local CAMRA branch - See you there!

André Pinkard – survey@westberkscamra.org.uk

CAMRA’s flagship annual guide gives details of breweries, beers and over 4500 town and country pubs. RRP £15.99. CAMRA members price £10 + £2.50 P&P https://shop.camra.org.uk/books
On Saturday 3 October, Basingstoke’s Wetherspoon pub ‘The Angel’ was the breakfast time meeting point for five colleagues and me in preparation for our 16 mile cross-country hike over the Hampshire Downs.

Inside ‘The Angel’ we tucked into the Spoon’s low-cost full English breakfast and unlimited coffee. At 9am, despite the early hour, we couldn’t resist a round comprising Longdog’s ‘Lamplight Porter’ for me – moderately bitter to the fore with a dark chocolate finish – and a choice of Upham’s ‘Stakes’ or West Berkshire’s ‘Mister Swift’s Pale Ale’ for the others.

Following a brief eastwards train ride to Winchfield, we began our southbound hike through woodland, along the Basingstoke canal and over the rolling limestone hills to Alton, in the splendour of early autumn sunshine. We passed South Warnborough and Shalden, arriving at Alton’s Eight Bells by 6pm. Opposite the church and dating back to England’s civil war, the pub is homely, comfortable and traditional.

The next pub stop was Long Sutton’s ‘Four Horseshoes’, an isolated, tranquil yet firmly traditional pub formerly owned by Gales Brewery and now run by an hospitable, affable couple hailing from England’s North. The interior is replete with solid furniture and fireplace, and hanging brass, mugs, jugs and curios adorn walls and wooden beams.

We got there around lunchtime and four of us enjoyed the home-cooked steak pie. Two ales were on tap and most of us had Milton’s ‘Minotaur’, a deep brown mild brewed in Cambridgeshire that is steeped in malty flavour despite its modest 3.3% ABV whilst John preferred the LocAle from Bowman’s – ‘Wallop’s Wood’.

The second half of the hike continued over hills, lanes and woodland in the splendour of the early autumn sunshine. We passed South Warnborough and Shalden, arriving at Alton’s Eight Bells by 6pm. Opposite the church and dating back to England’s civil war, the pub is homely, comfortable and traditional.

Four ales were on and we relaxed with a round of the refreshingly delicate 3.6% ‘Prowler Pale’ from Winchester’s Red Cat brewery. The other ales were Bowman’s ‘Swift One’, Cotleigh’s ‘25’ and Sharp’s ‘Doom Bar’.

A longer train ride from Alton station, via Brookwood, returned us to Basingstoke for 8pm and we called in at the Queen’s Arms, which is a lively, friendly, backstreet pub, a stone’s throw from the rail station. In addition to Courage and Doom Bar, the pub serves up to four guest ales sourced from all around the country. We opted for Stod Fold’s 3.8% ‘Gold’, which is a well-balanced, rounded pale ale. This Yorkshire brew matched our dinner marvellously: chilli-con-carne for me and home-made burger and chips for the others. The pub’s ad slogan, ‘What more could you want?’, was particularly apposite because, following our delicious meal and superb ale (which was quite enough), England’s defeat in the Rugby World Cup, beaming live from the pub TV, hardly mattered at all. The Queen’s Arms was a cracking finish to a memorable day out in the Hampshire countryside.

In the mid-1970s, there were only 44 brewing companies left in the whole of the USA, and the beer market was dominated by bland, light lagers. So the conditions were ripe for the development of an “alternative beer” movement, initially referred to as microbreweries, but more recently morphing into “craft”. They were able to draw on a wide range of brewing traditions from all around the world, including a substantial influence from British real ale, to produce a huge variety of interesting, characterful beers, and even developing their own entirely new styles.

Not surprisingly, beer enthusiasts looked at this and thought there was a golden opportunity to extend that buzz over to this side of the pond. However, there was a little problem. Britain already had a thriving craft beer scene, comprising both the established independent breweries that CAMRA had originally been created to champion, and hundreds of microbreweries that had sprung up since then in a similar way to the US.

Some of it could be conservative and stick-in-the-mud, but there was a huge amount of innovation and variety in beer styles. Yet it was this “real ale scene” that the new evangelists of craft chose to tilt against. Britain was surely ready for mega-strong beers, teeny measures, craft keg and cans, weird flavours, eyewatering prices, and check shirts and fancy beards.

A key tipping point was when BrewDog, the leading lights of the craft beer movement, stopped producing cask beer entirely and deliberately portrayed themselves as standing up against everything CAMRA represented, something that came across as a crass publicity stunt. There seems to be a continuing brush war between craft beer hipsters and real ale traditionalists, but surely everyone interested in good beer shares a huge amount of common ground. And it’s clear that most of the antagonism comes from one particular side.

The Curmudgeon column appears monthly in Opening Times, the CAMRA magazine published by Stockport & South Manchester branch. His other articles can be read at curmudgeoncolumns.blogspot.com
The following is a list of all forthcoming meetings of the West Berkshire branch of CAMRA. Some are 'social' meetings, lively and friendly occasions where we enjoy a few beers; others are 'branch' meetings, which are slightly more formal and where we discuss beer and pubs issues. Unless stated, our meetings are open to all-comers – and new members are particularly welcome!

### Diary Dates 2015-16

The following is a list of all forthcoming meetings of the West Berkshire branch of CAMRA. Some are 'social' meetings, lively and friendly occasions where we enjoy a few beers; others are 'branch' meetings, which are slightly more formal and where we discuss beer and pubs issues. Unless stated, our meetings are open to all-comers – and new members are particularly welcome!

**Wednesday 16 December**

Christmas Party - see box on page 2 for details
Bacon Arms, Newbury
7.30pm

**Tuesday 12 January**

Branch meeting - GBG selection (members only)
Royal British Legion, Pelican Lane, Newbury

**Saturday 23 January**

Central Southern Region Camden ale trail
Starts: Black Heart, Greenland Pl, London NW1
12 noon

**Tuesday 9 February**

Branch meeting - GBG selection (members only)
Hungerford Club, 3 The Croft, Hungerford

**Tuesday 16 February**

Beginners Cribbage & Dominoes
Cow & Cask, Inch’s Yard, Newbury

**Saturday 20 February**

Beer & Sausage festival visit
Cricketer’s Arms, Littleworth, Oxon
Check our website for details

**Daytime**

All meetings start at 8pm unless otherwise stated.

Check our website for further details: www.westberkscamra.org.uk

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**Beer Festival Diary**

CAMRA run or supported beer festivals provide excellent opportunities for sampling a wide range of real ales, from all over the UK and overseas. Here are some of the major and most accessible festivals for West Berkshire drinkers.

**1-5 December**

Pig’s Ear Beer & Cider Festival
Round Chapel, Id Glenarm Road, Hackney, London. E5 0PU
www.pigsear.org.uk

**29-30 January**

Salisbury Winterfest 2016
Royal British Legion, Club, 9-11 Endless Street, Salisbury. SP1 1DL
www.salisburycamra.org.uk

**17-20 February**

CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival
The Roundhouse, Pride Park, Derby. DE24 8JE
nwaf.org.uk

**2-4 March**

London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival
Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London. W1H 9AU
www.northlondoncamra.org.uk

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