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Free Newsletter

The Campaign for Real Ale West Berkshire November/December 2008

Good Beer Books

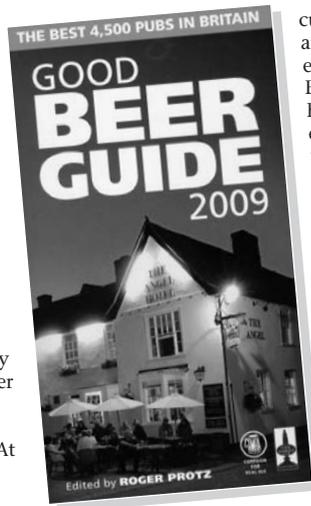
CAMRA has recently published 'A Beer a Day' written by our local beer expert, Jeff Evans and 'Good Beer Guide 2009', the 36th edition.

The 'GBG' features the best 4,500 pubs in Britain under country and county headings in the middle part of the guide. There is a description of each pub together with a wealth of useful details, including the full address and telephone number, opening hours and beers served. There are also symbols to identify facilities at the pub including beer gardens, real fires, real draught cider, meals, family rooms, campsites and accommodation. At the front of the guide is a full colour section with various illustrated features, including a guide to beer styles. Towards the back of the guide, there are comprehensive details of breweries that produce cask beer in the UK and their beers. The independent breweries (regional, smaller craft brewers and brew-pubs) are listed first, followed by the nationals and the globals. Tasting notes are given for many of the beers as well as their strength.

On 28 October, eleven West Berkshire pubs, included in the 2009 'GBG', were honoured by a special presentation at one of the featured pubs, the Berkshire Arms, on the A4 near Midgham. As the Guide mentions, there is an ever-changing range of three beers at this pub, where you can be sure of a warm welcome and good service.

Jeff Evans has drawn on his extensive beer knowledge, wider interests and tasting expertise to produce a handsome book 'A Beer a Day'.

He has chosen '366 beers to help you through the year', by linking beers to events,



customs, traditions and anniversaries that fall on each day of the year. Every day has a page headed with the date, event and matching beer together with its national flag and website. Jeff's writing provides fascinating information on each event and tasting notes for the matching beer, which is often illustrated.

For example, 14 December commemorates a seasonal event, Bankside Frost Fair and the matching beer is Fuller's Jack Frost. When describing the beer, Jeff writes that 'The aroma is full of juicy fruit and toffee, with just a hint of tea'. A further example,

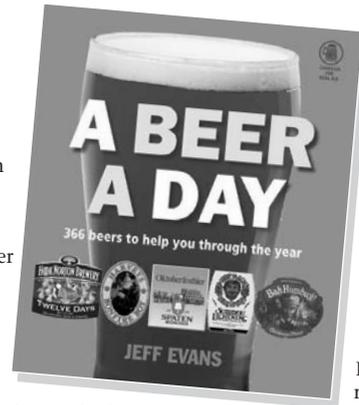
6 January commemorates a media event,

First episode of Inspector Morse broadcast, 1987 and the matching beer is Brakspear Bitter. Jeff writes about the TV series and the recent history of Morrells and Brakspear breweries. The link is that an episode was partly filmed at Brakspear's brewery, then situated in Henley-on-Thames.

Analysis of the contents reveals that the book includes 219 beers from the United Kingdom, 32 from Belgium, 27 from Germany, 44 from the rest of Europe, 30 from the USA and 14 from the rest of the world. Local breweries are represented by West Berkshire Old Father Thames - Jerome K Jerome dies, 14 June 1927 and Butts Barbus Barbus - Freshwater fishing season opens, 16 June.

It is a book that will broaden your knowledge in an entertaining way and inspire you to search for some of the enticingly described beers.

To help in this quest you could visit Westholme Store on the Northern edge of Goring-on-Thames, where 'Jack' keeps a huge



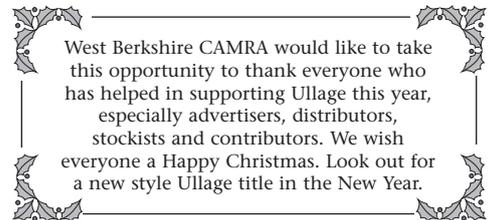
range of bottled beers. These are also illustrated on his website www.beersnale.co.uk

Jeff Evans will be signing copies of his book at the West Berkshire CAMRA Christmas social on Tuesday 16 December from 8pm.

The venue is the Angel, Hungerford and non-members are also most welcome to attend.

Please check our website for further details www.westberks.camra.org.uk

Christmas gift packs, which include membership and either of these good beer books, are available at the CAMRA online shop from £32. Follow the Membership, Renewals & Gift Packs link from www.camra.org.uk.



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The Old Bakery Yattendon Thatcham Berks RG18 0UE



Congratulations to the organisers and supporters of the successful fifth Newbury Real Ale festival at Northcroft on 13 September. Thanks to Sid Liddiard for photo.

Inside: All the latest pub and brewery news from West Berkshire, and much more!

Beer Scoring - Please Help!

The Good Beer Guide lists pubs based on the votes cast by local CAMRA branches. Throughout each year, pubs are surveyed and the quality of the beer is scored using the National Beer Scoring Scheme. The scheme uses a 0-5 scale for beer quality that can be submitted online using a survey form.

The scale is based on the following quality rating:

- 0 Unacceptable** - take it back, or cannot finish it.
- 1 Poor** - barely drinkable or drinkable with some resentment.
- 2 Average** - competently kept, drinkable, does not inspire.
- 3 Good** - good beer in good form, stay for another, seek out beer again. Maybe GBG standard.
- 4 Very Good** - excellent beer in excellent condition. GBG Standard!
- 5 Excellent** - the best you are likely to find. Award sparingly.

During January, these scores are collated and used to help draw up a shortlist of qualifying pubs. The voting process then whittles these down to the number allocated to the local CAMRA branch. This approach reflects CAMRA's belief that if a publican looks after his or her cask beer well then everything else in the pub is likely to receive the same high standard of care. To ensure that all pubs are considered fairly, with as much information about their beer quality as possible, please assist in this process by noting details of the date, pub, beer and quality on each visit and then submitting these, by 4 January, using the survey form accessible from www.westberks.camra.org.uk. Each form has space for up to five scores. Please remember to provide the additional information requested on the form such as whether you are a CAMRA member or not. For pubs outside our area, CAMRA members can also use www.beerscoring.org.uk.

Community Pub 2009

In February 2008, The Fox and Hounds at Donnington won West Berkshire CAMRA's inaugural Best Community Pub award, despite stiff competition from the likes of The Downgate in Hungerford, The Rising Sun at Stockcross and The Castle in Cold Ash.

West Berkshire CAMRA are now inviting nominations for next year's Best Community Pub in the region. We're looking for pubs that form an important part of their community by providing more than refreshment. The next winning pub will certainly have a welcoming atmosphere and may also support charitable causes, have sporting links, organise special events or offer important local services. Other evidence of strong interaction with the community will also count in its favour. Whether your favourite pub ticks these particular boxes or not, it will be in with a chance to win the award provided, of course, that at least one person has taken the trouble to nominate it. Don't delay! Nominate a pub, before 21 January, in one of three ways: a) write to West Berkshire CAMRA, c/o 2 Sutton Road, Speen, Newbury RG14 1UN; b) use the entry form on our website www.westberks.camra.org.uk; c) email secretary@westberks.camra.org.uk.

Please give reasons why you think the pub deserves the award in your nomination. All pubs in the area covered by West Berkshire CAMRA are eligible (roughly from Beenham/Sulhampstead westwards, northwards and southwards to the county border). Publicans are welcome to nominate their own pubs. The winner will be announced during Community Pubs Week in February.

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■ Congratulations to the **Swan Inn**, Inkpen for two awards announced at the 2008 RSPCA Good Business Awards for animal welfare. Runner up in both the Independent Restaurant and Food Retailer categories brings national recognition to the pub's restaurant and organic farm shop. Organic beers from Butts brewery are available in the pub. Darts and Quiz evenings are held on alternate Thursdays.

■ The **Swan Hotel**, Compton has reopened after being closed due to a fire in April 2006. It is now open all day with full breakfasts served from 8am every morning. The regular ale may change from Morland Original to Greene King IPA. Two guest ales will also be available.

■ The **West Berkshire Brewery** seasonal beer for November is Staked, Pleached & Ethered (ABV 4.3%), an oak brown beer. The December beer is



Fire Pot (ABV 4.5%) with a warm ruddy appearance and flavour. The brewery shop in Yattendon sells a variety of bottled beers, pre-ordered take away beer in containers as well as an expanded selection of merchandise and gifts. The shop is open Monday-Friday 10am-4pm and Saturday 10am-1pm.

In the weeks before Christmas, the shop will open for extended hours. Check their website for further details. www.wbbrew.co.uk

■ A third **Swan**, at London Road (A4), Newbury may offer the cheapest real ale in the area. In October, a pint of Wadworth 6X cost £1.99 and a pint of Fuller's London Pride cost £2.35. These regular prices should be held for several months.

■ Another pub with a special offer is the **Crown & Garter**, Inkpen Common. This is another one of the eleven West Berkshire pubs included in the 2009 Good Beer Guide. Their 'brown shield stamp' scheme is continuing and applies to pints of beer and cider on Friday and Saturday evenings from 8pm-11pm. For every 11 stamps collected, the next pint is free. A choice of four real ales is usually available.

■ The 2008 National Cider Pub of the Year award has been won by the **Square and Compass**, Worth Matravers, Dorset. This unique pub, with stunning views, has featured in every edition of the Good Beer Guide.

■ The **Crown and Horns**, East Ilsley will be offering a guest ale of Wells Bombardier or Adnams Broadside in addition to the regular ales, Timothy Taylor Landlord and Brakspear Best.

■ Mark and Tracy of the **Bowlers Arms** at Falkland Cricket Club, Wash Common usually have a guest beer from their native Wales in addition to several regular beers that include Butts Jester. The next seasonal ale from Brains brewery of Cardiff is Cwrw Seren.



■ The **Royal Oak**, Wantage has won a third CAMRA Pub of the Year award in 2008, this time for Central Southern Region, comprising Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and part of Hertfordshire. The other finalists were The Hop Pole, Aylesbury and The Bird in Hand, Knowle Hill.

■ There is an expanded stock of bottle conditioned ales at the **Londis** stores attached to Bellinger's (Jet) garage in Station Road, Grove (A338). The manager, Peter Fowler, offers a discount on beer for CAMRA members. He has recently launched the Pitstop brewery. His first brew, Starter's Orders (ABV 5%) will be released at the Royal Oak, Wantage.

■ **Kickers** bar at Newbury Rugby Club now serves Knobber (ABV 4.2%) from Ramsbury brewery in addition to the regular Archers Best Bitter.

■ Ann, Kim & Kelly have taken over at the **Lamb Inn**, Enborne Road, Newbury. They welcome all customers, old and new. **The Monument**, Newbury is also under new management.

■ The new management at the **Starting Gate** in Speen has reinstated cask beer. Currently on sale are Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Courage Best. The dining area has also been revamped and now trades under the name of Willowbank Restaurant and Grill.

■ The **Queen's Arms**, East Garston has reopened. Ringwood Best Bitter and Fortyniner are the regular ales. A local guest ale will also be offered.



Unusually, a beer from Barons Brewing Company based at Woollahra in Australia will be available. The first Barons beer to be stocked is 'Black Wattle' from their Native range. A variety of sporting prints and pictures adorn the walls of the bar. www.queensarmscountryhotel.co.uk

■ The **Six Bells**, Beenham is featured in the 2009 Good Beer Guide. John Keeling, Fuller's head brewer, will be hosting a five course dinner with accompanying beers at the pub on 27 November. Early booking is advised. www.thesixbells.net

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The Red House Marsh Benham

The Red House at Marsh Benham was once a house and was converted to a pub in the 18th century. It has a thatched roof and an extension that was added about five years ago. It might look like a typical, twee country pub, but this does not reflect its true nature.

The Red House is used by a cross section of people, from builders during the day and canal boat users during the boating season to cyclists and walkers. The pub is only a five minute walk from Hamstead lock on the Kennet and Avon canal. The Red House is a bar and restaurant so it is appreciated by lovers of ale as well as by diners.

Iain Clarke, a local CAMRA under-26 member, was employed as the manager about nine months ago when the owner, Xavier Le-Bellégo, took over the Red House. As the pub is a free house, Iain has full control over the beers he sells. He has currently chosen a beer from each of the local brewers, representing his personal favourites Butts Jester & West Berkshire Full Circle.



As Iain is a CAMRA member and performs regular quality checks on the ale as well as strip cleaning the beer lines every week, you can

expect it to be in tip-top form.

One of the innovations that Iain has introduced is a bottled beer menu which includes West Berkshire Mr Chubb's Lunchtime Bitter, Butts Le Butts Biere and beers from Germany, Belgium, Italy and Mexico (No, the beer is not Sol!).

Iain is also trying to encourage people to experiment with their beer and food by providing suggestions for a beer to drink with a particular dish, on the food menu.

He also encourages the chef to think of using beer in his cooking. At the moment there are a few dishes that have beer in them and Iain is looking at including some of the Belgian lambic beers in the puddings.

For a time, in the 1990s, the pub was renamed The Water Rat. It was then linked to David Bruce, founder of the, once famous, Firkin chain of pubs.

The Red House is signposted, to the south of the A4, just over two miles west of the A34, on the way to Hungerford from Newbury. More information about the pub can be found at www.redhousemarshbenham.co.uk

Adrian Bean



Meet the Brewer - Adnams



Before giving further details, below, of West Berkshire CAMRA's latest Meet the Brewer evening on Thursday, 20 November, here is some information about this great brewer to whet your appetite!

Adnams is one of the larger independent breweries and dates back to 1872. It operates 78 pubs and also sells in excess of 90 per cent of its beer outside these pubs. Their Sole Bay brewery is situated in picturesque Southwold, on the Suffolk coast, where Gordon Brown spent his summer break. Their three main beers are Adnams Bitter (ABV 3.7%), Explorer (ABV 4.3%) and Broadside (ABV 4.7%).

All three beers are included in Jeff Evans's book 'A Beer a Day'. The entry for 28 May, commemorates the Battle of Sole Bay, 1672, when the Dutch fleet attacked the English and French fleets, at anchor there. It also mentions that Broadside derives its name from the naval practice of turning a ship sideways in order to fire its cannons.

Adnams is a forward thinking company. It has a hi-tech, energy efficient brewing facility within the original brewery. There is a new warehouse on the outskirts of the town with a curved 'green' roof covered in vegetation including sedum, wild grasses and flowers. It was built on the site of a gravel pit to avoid harming the landscape. Although more expensive to construct it has reduced the carbon footprint. Recently the brewery introduced a bottled beer 'East Green Carbon Neutral' endorsed by the Carbon Trust. Their distinctive glasses and lightweight bottles have the name embossed on their base so that you can feel you're drinking Adnams as well as tasting it! Jonathan Adnams, aged 52, is the Executive chairman. His unconventional background includes leaving school at 16 to become a deep-sea fisherman. His interests now include playing bluegrass banjo.

Websites: www.adnams.co.uk & www.beerfromthecoast.co.uk

In 2008, West Berkshire CAMRA has organised 'Meet the brewer' evenings involving Shepherd Neame of Kent and West Berkshire Brewery. To round off the year, we offer you the opportunity to meet David Waller from Adnams brewery, who will be on hand to discuss all aspects of the enterprise. Damien Harcken has kindly agreed to host this meeting in the congenial setting of The Gun, Wash Common on Thursday 20 November at 8pm. There will be an opportunity to sample several Adnams beers during the course of the evening. As space is limited, please complete the online booking form on our website www.westberks.camra.org.uk, if you wish to attend this special event.

Beer Miles

J D Wetherspoon are holding 'The World's Biggest International Real Ale festival' at their pubs from 30 October to 16 November. They have arranged for some international master brewers to brew beers at UK breweries for sale during the festival.

From the USA, Matt Bryndilson of Firestone Walker brewery will be brewing a California Pale Ale at Marston's brewery. www.firestonewalker.com

From Japan, Toshi Ishi of Yo-Ho brewing company will be brewing Yona Yona at Banks's brewery in Wolverhampton.

From Denmark, Mikkel Borg Bjergsø of Mikkeller's brewery will be brewing Viking's Return at Jennings brewery in Cumbria. www.mikkeller.dk

From Australia, Richard Adamson of Barons brewing co will be brewing Barons Black Wattle Original Ale in cask conditioned form at Banks's brewery. It has a rich amber colour and a base malt flavour of toffee and caramel. The roasted wattle seed rounds out the offering with a unique taste



that hints of hazelnut, chocolate and mocha. www.baronsbrewing.com

Among the fifty ales and ciders that will be on sale over the course of the festival is Namyslow original plum beer, specially imported from Poland. Beers from Northern Ireland, The Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales will be available as well as a large choice of English ales. The John Russell Fox in Andover is one of the Wetherspoon pubs where it may be possible to sample these unusual beers. www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

■ Congratulations to West Berkshire CAMRA treasurer, Steve Kelly, for running 13.1 miles and completing his first Half Marathon in Bristol, in a commendable time of 1 hour 41 minutes. He finished ahead of his younger brother, Den. Afterwards, rehydration was assisted by the consumption of real ales, including St. Austell Tribute and Otter Bitter at the Nova Scotia hotel, a traditional harbourside pub in Hotwells!

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Beer Festival Diary

CAMRA-run 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.

21-22 November

Wantage Beer Festival

Masonic Hall, Alfred Street, Wantage OX12 8AN
Details: www.whitehorsecamra.org.uk

21-23 November

Whitchurch Beer Festival

Whitchurch Sports & Social Club, Longmeadow, Whitchurch RG28 7RB
Details: www.whitchurchbeerfestival.org.uk

21-24 January

National Winter Ales Festival

New Century Hall, Manchester
Details: www.alefestival.org.uk/winterales

Diary Dates 2008

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!

Tue 11 November *Branch Meeting*
Woodpecker, Wash Water, Newbury, RG20 OLU

Thu 20 November *"Meet the Brewer Evening" with Adnams*

The Gun, Newbury, RG14 6NE
Pre-book online at www.westberkscamra.org.uk

Tue 16 December *Xmas Social*
Angel, Hungerford, RG17 0JH

Tue 6 January *GBG 2010 Selection - preliminary meeting (Members only)*
Blue Ball, Greenham, Newbury

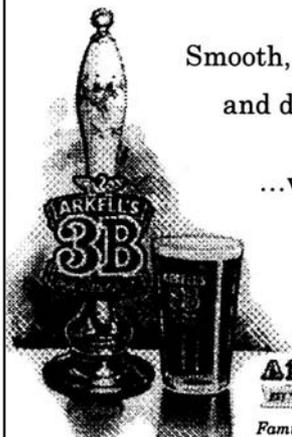
Tue 20 January *"Slightly East" Train Crawl*
Rowbarge, Woolhampton 8pm, Swan, Thatcham 9.10pm

All meetings start at 8pm unless otherwise stated.
Please check the local CAMRA website for further details of events: www.westberkscamra.org.uk

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What is CAMRA?

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is a non-profit-making consumers' organisation dedicated to preserving the best traditions of our pub and brewing industry. It was founded in 1971 and campaigns for pub users' rights, fighting for good quality beer, plenty of choice, sensible licensing laws and fair prices, among many issues. Our membership now stands at more than 90,000 but the more members we have, the more pressure we can bring to bear on politicians – in both Britain and Europe – as well as on executives in the industry.

Why not fill in the membership application form printed above, join the Campaign for Real Ale and make sure your voice is heard, too?

Keep Us Informed!

Licensees: We want to tell everyone your news. Help *Ullage* pass on the latest information about your pub's beers, hospitality and events by contacting West Berkshire CAMRA (see contact details opposite).

You may also wish to consider advertising in *Ullage*. Compared with other media, it's very cost effective – especially as it reaches exactly the people you'd like to attract to your pub. More than 2,500 copies are distributed to pubs in the area, so don't miss out on this great marketing opportunity!

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