

ULLAGE



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Free Newsletter

The Campaign for Real Ale West Berkshire

July/August 2008

It's Festival Time Again!

Earls Court, London will again be the venue for CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival this year, with the event running from Tuesday, 5 August, until Saturday, 9 August.



Around 65,000 people attended the 'Showcase for British Beer' last summer and the same numbers are expected to come along this year to participate in the festival fun.

More than 500 tasty tipples from the smallest microbreweries and large regional brewers have been hand-picked for visitors to try. These will include wheat beers, golden ales, stouts, porters, bitters, milds, bottle-conditioned beers, ciders, perries and traditional foreign beers from around the world.

But the festival is not only about the ale. Visitors will also be able to enjoy a good variety of food, live music, entertainment, games, tombolas and quizzes in the comfort of a family-friendly atmosphere. The event also offers a great opportunity to catch up and socialise with friends or unwind after work.

Other festival facilities include a family room, tutored beer tastings (book in advance as places are limited) and corporate hospitality. The Great British Beer Festival has now been running for more than 30 years and attracts beer lovers from all over the world. Come and see what the fuss is all about! For more information, visit www.gbbf.org.

Beenham Pub Award Party



Local brewers join Glynis and Chris at The Six Bells

There was a party atmosphere at The Six Bells in Beenham on Tuesday, 27 May. During the evening, licensees Glynis Snow and Chris Harman were handed the West Berkshire CAMRA Pub of the Year award by its chairman, Adrian Bean.

It was a fine evening and Chris and Glynis had laid on a jazz group to play in the pub's large rear garden. Members of several local groups that regularly use the free house, including Beenham Band, bell ringers and footballers, had turned out in force. Chris's mother had even travelled from their native New Zealand. The Six Bells was so busy that there was hardly room to move in the front bar, back restaurant or the new conservatory. Latecomers found both car parks were already full. At 8.30pm the pub spilled out into the rear garden for the award presentation. Holding the framed certificate and standing beside Glynis, Chris spoke on their behalf about the attractions of an English pub and its role in our heritage. He also paid tribute to the support of the local groups that are essential to pubs with little 'passing trade'.

To win this award, amongst other factors such as good service and atmosphere, a pub needs to serve a variety of real ales consistently well. The Six Bells was serving Maggs Magnificent Mild and Dr Hexter's Healer from West Berkshire Brewery of Yattendon as well as Oxfordshire Bitter from Butler's Brewery of Mapledurham. The brewers of these local beers were there to enjoy the party and lend their full support.

Although The Six Bells is slightly off the beaten track, being near the western end of Beenham (which is situated between Aldermaston Wharf and Chapel Row), it is well worth making a short detour to visit. The village is served by Newbury buses route 104 and Aldermaston station is 2.4 miles away by road. Travel tips can be found on www.beenhamonline.org. The pub has its own comprehensive website: www.thesixbells.net.

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

Swift Halves

■ This year's **Reading Beer Festival**, in early May, was another triumph. The event is now in its 15th year and this time around attendance broke all records. Nearly 15,000 visitors stepped through the door and more than 55,000 pints were downed. Can anyone seriously claim there's no demand for real ale any longer? The Local Beer of the Festival award was won by West Berkshire Brewery's Dr Hexter's Healer. Butts Brewery from Great Shefford came second with Le Butts Bière, while Anastasia's Exile Stout from Ascot Ales in Camberley ran in third. CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Championships were also staged at the festival. Green Valley Farmhouse Vintage Cyder, produced in Exeter, and Gregg's Pit Perry, from Herefordshire, claimed the gold awards.

■ The **Red Lion** in Upper Basildon is holding its annual beer festival/outdoor music event on Sunday, 17 August, all day.

■ Another **Red Lion**, the one in Theale, has a new landlady, who took over in the middle of May. The pub is currently stocking two real ales. Meanwhile, **The Crown** in Theale has swapped Adnams Broadside for Shepherd Neame Spitfire and it's going down well with the locals.

■ **The Gun**, Wash Common, is now serving up to five real ales, with a recent visitor being Triple fff's Moondance. The garden area is now accessible, too.

■ South of Newbury, **The Swan Inn** at Newtown, closed since January, has re-opened after an extensive refurbishment by Hall & Woodhouse, costing over £1 million pounds. Changes include a new kitchen building, an additional outside area and re-positioning of the main bar. Beers available on draught include Badger First Gold, Tanglefoot and a seasonal beer, which will be Fursty Ferret for summer 2008.

■ **The Woodpecker**, Wash Water, is still trading normally despite the recent, sad, death of landlord Andrew Cover. Andrew had been in the trade for 45 years, including 12 at The Woodpecker. With help from their families initially, Janet Cover is now running the Arkell's pub and maintaining its high standards. 2B, 3B and Moonlight beers are served as well as bar snacks and pub food. She looks forward to welcoming customers old and new.

■ Good news from **The Blue Ball** at Greenham. The developers who had been trying to demolish the pub have withdrawn their latest planning application.

■ Even more good news comes from Stanford Dingley, where **The Bull** re-opened on 1 May. The pub is currently stocking six real ales, with beers from West Berkshire Brewery joined by the likes of Arkell's 3B and Summer Ale, Brakspear's Bitter and Oxford Gold, Rebellion IPA and Wadsworth's 6X. The pub is open all day, with food all home-made

and served until 10pm. No item on the food menu costs more than £10. A classic car group meets here on the third Saturday of every month.

■ Don't miss the annual **Newbury Real Ale Festival**, this year taking place on Saturday, 13 September. The venue is, as usual, Northcroft Park cricket field, and the event, hosted by Newbury and Thatcham Hockey Club, will once again be supporting the Naomi House children's hospice from the proceeds. More than 50 beers are likely to be on sale, as well as ciders and perries. The festival opens at 12 noon and runs through until 11.30pm.

■ **CAMRA membership** has now broken through the 90,000 barrier, the highest ever total in the consumer organisation's 37-year existence. Two high-profile new recruits were 'Man Behaving Badly' Neil Morrissey and former Spandau Ballet front man Tony Hadley, who joined at the Bradford and East Anglian beer festivals, respectively.

■ Look out for a new beer from **Butts Brewery**. Mudskipper is a 4.2% brew that is aimed at the summer's music festivals and has a pumpclip inspired by the soggy conditions often experienced at Glastonbury. Like all beers from Butts, it is brewed with organically-grown malt and hops.

■ If you're looking for an unusual day out later this year, make a note in your diary for the weekend of 26-27 September. That's the occasion of the second **Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival**, staged in conjunction with CAMRA. The event combines a full card of horse racing at Britain's premier racing venue with the chance to sample around 130 real ales, ciders and perries, at an average price of £2.50 per pint. CAMRA members benefit from a substantial discount on the entrance fee (which includes access to the racing) and, with the rail station only a few minutes' walk from the course, you can happily leave the car at home.

■ **The Royal Oak** at Wantage has been named as Pub of the Year by our colleagues in the Vale of the White Horse branch of CAMRA. The town-centre free house is a long-standing *Good Beer Guide* entry and a magnet for discerning drinkers across South Oxfordshire and further afield.

■ **Arkell's Brewery** played host to royalty for the first time in its 165-year history recently, when the Duke of Kent helped launch a new beer to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Territorial Army, with which the Arkell family has strong personal connections. Wessex Volunteer Ale, at 4% ABV, is available in both cask and bottle.

■ The monthly cask beer from **Brakspear** is Hooray Henley, a 4% citrus-hoppy bitter celebrating the Henley Regatta and keeping alive the brewery's association with its old home town. Following the closure of the Henley brewery in 2002, Brakspear's beers have a new home at Witney.

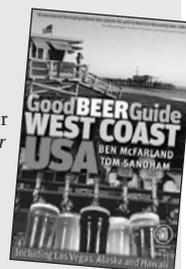
Travelling Abroad? Take the Good Beer Guide.

If you're one of those people who rely on the *Good Beer Guide* when travelling around the UK in search of a good pub and a top-quality pint, you'll be interested to know that CAMRA Books has now expanded its range of *Good Beer Guide* titles.

The first *Good Beer Guide* to Belgium appeared in 1992 and is now in its fifth edition. It's a wonderfully informative, no-nonsense introduction to this amazing beer country and international beer hunters swear by it. It was joined in 2006 by *Good Beer Guide to Germany*, a massive tome detailing all the brewers in the country and the beers they brew. Next, a year later, came the *Good Beer Guide to Prague & the Czech Republic*, the definitive guide to the birthplace of pilsner and a land where beer is an intrinsic part of everyday life. The latest addition to the range is the *Good Beer Guide to West Coast USA*.

If you're not already aware, then this book will convince you that some of the most exciting developments in brewing are taking place across the Atlantic. The book charts the progress of the craft brewing movement in the States, highlighting the best beers and the must-visit bars from Washington state and Oregon, through California, down to the Mexican border. It even has sections on Las Vegas, Alaska and Hawaii.

Anyone planning a trip to any of the countries covered by this series of books shouldn't leave home without the relevant title. Each book is handsomely produced in full colour and contains all the important information you need for getting there, travelling around, visiting pubs and bars and ordering beer. All can be ordered directly from CAMRA at www.camra.org.uk (discounts for CAMRA members).



Fun With Aunt Sally



A fun evening was enjoyed at The Bell at Aldworth (what evenings there aren't fun?) when the annual West Berkshire CAMRA Aunt Sally contest took place in mid-June. With the blessing of sunny, if a bit fresh, weather, four teams battled it out for the title of the branch's best stick thrower. Some friendly rivalry with a team from the neighbouring Vale of the White Horse branch of CAMRA, and The Bell's usual, very generous hospitality, helped the evening pass very quickly. Congratulations to Richard Goss and his family on winning our mini-tournament (clearly a sign of a well-spent youth). Don't miss next year's event.

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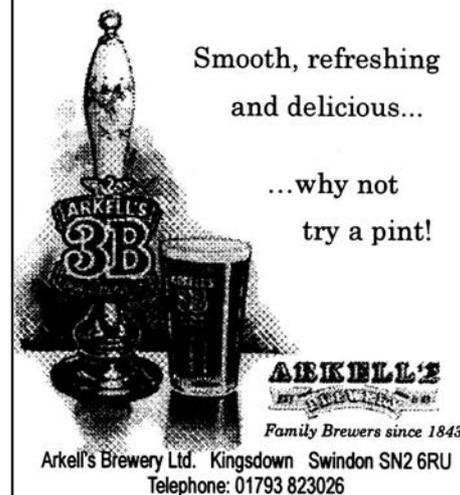
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The Ibex Chaddleshworth

I was once told that there were only two pubs in the country called The Ibex; the one at Chaddleshworth and one in Scotland. I can find no trace of the Scottish one, so our local Ibex, named after a species of European mountain goat, it is fair to say, is unique.



The pub is also pretty rare in a number of other ways. It incorporates a Post Office, set up in November 2006 at the instigation of landlord Andy Jones and Parish Councillor Paul Johnston, after the local shop and Post Office closed. It is only the second one in the country taking a 'partner approach', working with the postmistress at Aldbourne.

As well as all the normal Post Office supplies, The Ibex shop sells newspapers, stationery, bread baked on the premises and local free range eggs, and acts as agents for a pharmacy, a dry cleaner and a florist. Oh, yes, and the pub also sells beer, of course – very good beer.

The Ibex was originally an old farmhouse which was partly pulled down and added to before opening as a pub called The Star in 1839. Later acquired by Courage and then Morland, it is now a Greene King house, but still proudly sports the attractive Morland livery. The ubiquitous Greene King IPA is a permanent fixture but Andy takes full advantage of the brewery's guest list. Brain's Reverend James was on sale at the beginning of June, and something



equally tasty will be available by the time you read this. There are also some interesting bottled ciders available.

A previous licensee was local jockey Colin Brown, who rode the famous Desert Orchid to a string of victories, but the pub has had a chequered career since then. Andy and his wife Julia came to The Ibex from Southampton four years ago, and have made it what every village pub should be – an essential part of community life. Good, home-cooked British food is served, with 70% of the vegetables grown in the pub's kitchen garden. The public garden, now beautifully restored, is a pleasant place to relax with your pint, and is big enough to hold a marquee to seat 200 for a wedding.



The Ibex is fortunate that it has never been knocked through into one, soulless barn. As well as the little room housing the Post Office, there are two comfortable bars with open fireplaces, a spacious conservatory dining area, a smaller dining area, and a multi-function room that can be used for conferences. Wi-fi internet access is available.

The pub hosts a wide range of social activities throughout the year, such as Chaddleshworth Village Dance, terrier racing and a Christmas market, and has four darts teams. As well as running this enterprising little empire, Andy and Julia have five children; the latest, Eva, was born only a few weeks ago, so they are very much a part of the community.

If there ever was another Ibex Inn, I bet it was never as good as this one. For more information, see: www.the-ibex.co.uk.

Roy Bailey

Crawling for Mild



West Berkshire CAMRA members turned out in force for a dedicated 'mild crawl' around Newbury in May. CAMRA celebrates May as Mild Month, to draw attention to this often-forgotten beer style and to encourage more pubs to stock this type of beer, which is refreshingly low in strength but very tasty.

The crawl kicked off at The Lion in West Street, where Wadworth's excellent Pize-Size Mild is always available. Reluctantly, the crawlers then had to move on but discovered a rare treat at the Lock, Stock and Barrel. The Fuller's pub had gone out of its way to source a cask of Thwaites Dark Mild for the occasion, and exceptionally good it was, too.

The third port of call was The Queens Hotel in the Market Place. This Marston's house always stock Banks's Original, a lighter form of mild from the West Midlands. Finally, crawlers repaired to The Cooper's Arms in Bartholomew Street for pints of Arkell's 2B, not strictly a mild as such but a low-strength bitter that CAMRA also promotes during the month of May.

Our thanks go to all the pubs for joining in the fun of the mild crawl. Let's hope we don't have to wait until next May to savour more milds in this part of West Berkshire.

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 on page 4).

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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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.

11-13 July

Woodcote Festival of Ales

Off A4074, north of Reading

Details: www.woodcote-festival-ales.org.uk

7-11 August

Great British Beer Festival

Earls Court, London

Details: www.gbbf.org.uk

26-27 September

Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival

(includes horse racing)

Details: www.ascot.co.uk

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 8 July Branch Meeting
Butt Inn, Aldermaston, RG7 4LA

Sat 19 July Family Day
Blubeckers at the Rowbarg, RG7 5SH: start 1pm

Tue 22 July Social Evening
Five Bells, Wickham, RG20 8HH

Tue 5 August Branch Meeting
Bowler's Arms, Newbury, RG14 6TW

Fri 8 August Branch Get-together
Great British Beer Festival 2008: lunchtime

Tue 19 August Social Evening
Langley Hall, Beedon, RG20 8SA

Tue 9 September Branch meeting
Blue Ball, Newbury, RG14 7HY

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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