

ale

Cambridge & District Branch Newsletter

Issue 358

Winter 2012

The Osborne Arms ... the latest victim Which pub is next?



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**The Cambridge Interim Planning
Policy Guidance: A good start
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Pub News

As incoming editor of ALE it would have been very nice to start my tenure with a “good news” story. I’m afraid I feel compelled not to do this, for whilst there are undoubtedly good things happening out there, the destruction of our city pubs continues unabated.

As I write, **The Osborne Arms**, Hills Road, is in the process of being demolished. The loss of another pub is bad enough, but even more importantly it looks like the pub in the building next door, the excellent **Flying Pig**, may swiftly follow. Our esteemed MP Julian Huppert may well have called for a conservation order to save The Pig, but this appears to offer little protection, as seen by The Osborne, which was “protected” by a similar order.

Further news from the **Dog and Pheasant** (Saigon City) in Chesterton suggests that the bulldozers will be moving in at the end of October. With **The Haymakers** closed and **The Penny Ferry** also under development threat, this leaves only one pub, **The Green Dragon**, serving the whole of Chesterton.

The Bird (in hand) on Newmarket Road looked destined to become an estate agent – a change of use that seem to be happening overnight, and despite of it being, in the words of Steevo the ex- licensee, “a viable pub.” A last minute reprieve has seen it placed on the market with Greene King looking for a buyer.

To give the City Council credit, they are putting up some opposition. The developers wishing to replace **The Royal Standard** in Mill Road with student accommodation has been forced to appeal after councillors overturned a planning officer decision to let

Branch Diary

November - December 2012

Don't forget that all Branch members are very welcome to attend the monthly business meetings. Those upcoming are (all 8pm)

13 November – Waterman, Mitcham's Corner, Cambridge

27 November – Branch AGM, University Social Club, Mill Lane, Cambridge

11 December – Tally Ho, Trumpington

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Pub News Continued...

them go ahead, and we hear that **The Carpenters Arms**, Victoria Road is to open shortly after undergoing a similar process.

Following on from the Governments National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and in response to public opinion, the City Council has issued a draft Interim Planning Policy Guidance (IPPG). They believe it will offer pubs greater protection from profiteering development. Cambridge CAMRA is not sure, however, that the IPPG is protection enough, and later in this issue, Ali Cook, our Public Affairs Officer, tells you why.

Another "saved" pub, **The Unicorn** in Cherry Hinton has been placed on the market for an asking price of £295,000. It remains under threat until a buyer can be found.

Further a field, **The Black Bull** in Sawston, last year noted for the excellent quality of beer and an entry in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2013, is now a Chinese take away. I understand that the owners have plans to return it to a pub as soon as someone suitable is found to run it.

But I did mention that there is some good news too:

Congratulations to Steve and Hayley Pellegrini, on the opening of the new 200 capacity "gig" room in **The Portland Arms**, Mitcham's Corner.



The Portland is a Greene King pub, but the couple also support "Locale" brewers, in The Hopbine, Fair Street, which they also manage, and where a recent successful beer festival has attracted more trade.

Talking of beer festivals, **The Mill**, Mill Lane



has just completed an offering of 32 real ales, the majority of which were from local brewers. 2

more hand pumps have been added to the bar proper, raising the total of real ales on sale to 8, with one real cider on hand pump.

I'm looking forward to the excellent **Cambridge Blue**, (Gwydir Street) beer festival 25th-27th October.

The Maypole, Park Street is likely to be



adding 8 more hand pumps to the rear bar in very near future, taking the total possible offering to 16 real ales,

though the number of ales available may depend on the season.

The Jolly Scholar looks to be re-opening in



January. I understand that the new owners are advertising for an experienced brewer, and have plans to turn the hitherto under-

used bar area into a brewpub. Less reliable sources tell me that **The Med**, Perne Road, may be considering something along the same lines. 2 brewpubs in Cambridge would be most welcome!

And from our travelling correspondents:

Congratulations to the villages of Horningsea and Thriplow, both of which have managed to gain ownership of their local

pubs. **The Plough and Fleece** at Horn-



Plough and Fleece

ingsea has been acquired on a short lease until the village can raise the £239,000 asking price. A

company of 71 villagers have bought the freehold to **The Green Man**, at Thriplow. Extensive building works are planned, but the new owners asked us to reassure customers that they are still open for business. (The food is to be recommended – Ed).

Rumours that David Short is finally handing over the keys to **The Queens Head** Newton



to his son, Robert in October are not founded. David and his family are celebrating 50

years of the Short family being in residence, and 40 continuous years of the pub being included in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide – one of only 7 pubs in the UK to do so.

David's refusal to retire means that Laurie at the **Bees-in-the-Wall**, Whittlesford, will have to wait a little bit longer before he becomes the long-



est serving licensee still active in our district, having spent 30 years behind the bar.

The Boot, Dullingham is holding a Winter Beer Festival Fri/Sat/Sun 23/24/25 November. 15 beers will be available with music on Friday



and Saturday night.

The Three Blackbirds, Woodditton, staged a harvest market mid – September. Visitors were invited to sample cheese and wine from the Pub menu;



hopefully they will do it again in the near future.

The White Swan at Quy hosted the first Quy beer festival in early September. Proceeds from sales of the official programme – de-



scribed by our correspondent as 'A work of art.' went to the Castle School in Cambridge. Beers were mostly LocAle, with samples from all of the Cambridge brewers. Unusually, four beers from France were also on offer.

The Bell, Bottisham has been fitted with a resplendent new timber bar. Our correspondent recommends the Greene King beers in this



pub, which are, he says, always top quality.

The Tickell Arms, Willingham has introduced Nethergate IPA, Umbel Ale and Old Growler to accompany a regular beer from Milton Brewery.



In **The Hole in the Wall**, Little Wilbraham, our reporter noticed "an uneasy fraternisation" be-

Pub News Continued...

tween drinkers and diners, "A sub division is employed in the shape of a settle type seating, transforming the main bar area into a restaurant extension, leaving drinkers to stand at the bar in front of the open fire – place. The theory is that this would change if the number of drinkers warranted it.

However, some drinkers would be deterred by the constant comings and goings of waiters etc..." It may be worth the inconvenience though, as he later describes the selection of beers as "excellent"!

Greene King is looking for a new tenant for **The White Swan** in Conington, which is currently closed. Just down the road, **The Poacher** in Elsworth is gaining a good reputation for it's changing range of real ales and good value food.



Red Lion, Swaffham Priors

Welcome to, Barry and Jo Oakes who took over **The Red Lion**, Swaffham Priors, in early September ...



Plough in Duxford

to Bill Johnson, who now holds the reigns at **The Plough** in Duxford, ...



and to Phil and Lynn, the new licensees of **The Three Hills** at Bartlow.

We wish you all well in your new ventures and will be out to see you soon.

And finally, Congratulations to **Milton**



Brewery whose Pegasus bitter won a bronze award in the best bitter category of Champion Beer of Britain 2012 at The Great British Beer Festival.

CAMRA Correspondents: Carl Woolf, Matthias Miller, Terry Smith, Tony Millins

Do you have news we could use?

We depend greatly on Branch members alerting us to what's going on in our local pubs – interesting beers, new initiatives, possible threats etc We now have a dedicated email address to which any news can be sent, please –

pub-news@cambridge-camra.org.uk



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The Big Apple

Part 3 Amsterdam Avenue

Half four in the Upper West Side was busy as sprogs, students and workers made their way home for the weekend. The mugginess of late September and early October had finally broken so the subway trip up to 72nd Street wasn't too unpleasant. I headed uptown, as the locals have it, along Amsterdam Avenue to my first hostelry of the day, the **Amsterdam Ale House**, found at the junction with 76th Street.



As I flounced in, I missed the 'greeter' who would have asked me if I was planning to eat and found me a seat. Instead, I found a vacant bar stool and heaved it to another section of the bar to get more elbow-room. I thought 'the Ale House seemed awfully busy for the time of day but the post-work Friday crowd were obviously also out for a few drinks.' It has a long bar down most of the right-hand side and tables for diners taking up the floor space. Having perused the beer menu, I plumped for an enjoyable Geary's Autumn Ale. The food menu was jolly tempting but once again I stupidly missed the chance to eat.

A short stroll from there, I entered Jake's Dilemma and was I.D.'d by a blister who

must have been my junior by around fifteen years. As I drank my pint of Goose Island IPA, the doorman's fastidiousness was explained. I suspect it is very popular amongst students as I am certain I was the oldest customer by ten years or more. I felt decidedly grizzled. Beer Pong was being played in one part of the room. Not one of my favourite bars. If I trolled up Amsterdam Avenue again, I would give it a miss. A sign on the wall did state that each month a percentage of profit is donated to local charities, so if you do pop in, you can feel good about drinking in there!



My next stop was **The Gin Mill**, a dreadfully busy and terribly lively bar between W81st and W82nd Streets. A most convivial atmosphere was present but it was so chock-a-block I couldn't even find perching room at the bar as I drank my beer (details unknown). I had to 'float' near the bar, eyes fixed on one of the screens arranged about the walls. It's another long pub with lots of tables but all were stacked solid with customers both with the nose bag on and drinks in hand.

The narrowest of all of the bars I found in



large fish tank which almost acts as a divider to split the room into two. A relaxing choice I thought. On one occasion I had nipped in for a couple of braces and I was given an extra beer for nothing. My chosen beer ran out as it was poured, not making a full glass so I paid for another and was given the nearly-full glass for free. Beer bargain. Sports were always shown on the numerous screens but sadly, I again saw no cricket.

Boko Fittleworth

Further reading:

www.amsterdamalehouse.com
www.nycbestbar.com/jakes
www.nycbestbar.com/ginmill
www.thedeadpoet.com/ordereze
stjamesgatenyc.com
www.divebarnyc.com

NYC was **The Dead Poet**, just a few doors down from The Gin Mill. Mahogany-panelled walls feature portraits of various dead poets and other literary jonnies. My first was a Captain Lawrence ale, an IPA I think but I can't recall how I found it. Second was a 7.5% bottle of Dead Poet Epic IPA which went down jolly well, especially as I was charged \$8 instead of the stated \$12. It never got very busy but the staff and other customers were nice and friendly.

Across the Avenue I found **St James' Gate**, a smarter and somewhat posher bar than I usually enjoy. Again, I'd most-likely give this one a miss and choose one of the others instead. However, if you're looking for a meal rather than craft beers, this place may be just the pip.

Not far from Amsterdam Avenue is **Dive75** at 101 West 75th Street, a busy little place



with a decent selection of ales and food available. There is a

The Plough



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What has changed?

We visit **The Kingston Arms** first. This pub is a regular in ALE magazine, but strangely we haven't been here for years. The choice of beer is excellent, so nothing has changed



here. There are dozens of games stacked up near the door, so we delve first into Buckaroo. David cannot harness his enthusiasm and no matter where he hangs his lasso, the donkey will not buck. Viv, drinking Brewer's Gold from Crouch Vale (4%), has less luck and cannot get her pickaxe to stay on at all. Meanwhile, Nicola and I test our skill with the noughts and crosses. Some pieces are missing and she is tempted (a la two Ronnies) to go to the bar and ask for some "oes". We soon become peckish. Nicola opts for a sausage and onion sandwich – there are 3 types of sausage. Viv is

On a Saturday in mid August, Fred Laband takes to the streets of Cambridge in search of some of our old favourites...

pleased to order her dream meal combination – soup followed by a cheese board. There are 7 cheeses to choose from. We of course each try another beer. I love Thornbridge beers and find that the Jaipur IPA (5.9%) is both sweet and sharp. The overlying theme in this pub is choice, but that does not mean that there is a lack of quality. Indeed in terms of quality this pub has not changed at all. The Kingston Arms is however in a constant state of flux, where new beers, sausages, even ice cream are tried and tested. The only criticism of this pub comes from the eagle-eyed Nicola. There are too many A4 laminates in the window – blocking the natural light. No doubt these reflect that so much is going on in this pub.

Next up is **The Geldart**, which was something of a run down back street pub when I



last visited many years ago to watch an England game in the back room. How this pub has changed! There are 8 handpumps.

I choose Caledonian Deuchars IPA (3.8%), one of my all time favourites which I don't often see in pubs these days. Viv's pint is the standout though – the Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted (4.2%) is packed with flavours of marmalade cake. The pub has fantastic walls covered with interesting curios and local art. There is even a proper juke box! On the food list is pancakes, which we must return for. We all agree that this pub is outstanding and can't wait to return for one of their regular live music slots.

We walk into town a little and aim for the **Elm Tree**. This Charles Wells/ Banks and Taylor pub offers an ever wide choice of beers. Colchester Metropolis (3.9%), B&T Dark Mild (3.8%) are chosen, but again



Viv's choice wins the vote. B&T Fruit Bat (4.5%) is stunning and like liquid fruit salad; it is the best beer of the day! We love the choice of reading matter with several copies of beer guides and beer books to browse. We are pleased to find a choice of Top Trumps. Nicola is undisputed queen of this game and once she gets hold of the Bugatti Veyron card we are swept aside. This pub has changed little since my last visit, yet there is something we all feel a little uneasy

about. We feel that there is too much furniture and find it hard to sit down. We are surrounded by hundreds of photographs of regulars on the walls. We feel a bit claustrophobic! Never the less this is a fine pub, with fine beers.

Finally, we go the **Panton Arms**, an old stomping ground of David's. This pub is



quite hidden away and approaching from town, we initially think that it is closed. Once we round the corner, we find quite an impressive outdoor area covered in glass high above. David is architecturally impressed with the splay door. This is a modern outlook and we like it. This is another pub that has moved with the times. The bar area is rather sparse, with little decoration, so, compared to the Elm Tree, the pub does lack some character. Elgood's Cambridge Bitter (3.8%) is available and it is zesty and crisp. Wharfebank's Golden Pursuit (4%) is certainly deep gold. We cannot find games, but the pistachio eating becomes competitive – Viv wins hands down. The evening food is great. We all opt for burgers, but in 4 different guises. I am upset that David's burger is rectangular. But I do have French Fries, whereas the others are chunky.

I'll keep the conclusion brief. All 4 of these pubs offer great choice and are all moving with the times. In many cases, a lot of money has been spent on these pubs, but they are thriving. We will return sooner this time.

More Than a Regular Pub

On the face of it the **Plough and Fleece, Horningsea** is no different to thousands of other village pubs. As I entered the roomy public bar early on a Tuesday evening a familiar scene welcomed me. A group of locals were gathered around the small wooden bar enthusiastically putting the world to rights. A few more were seated at dark pine tables, having chosen to partake of the excellent menu. All were waiting in anticipation of the quiz – a regular feature on Tuesdays.



I was greeted by a smiling and efficient barmaid and given a choice of three real ales:

Hardy and Hansen's Kimberley Bitter (3.9%), Rudgates Jorvik Blonde (3.8%) and Wadworth Boundary Bitter (4%)

"Hang on a minute," I exclaimed, "isn't this a Greene King pub? Where is the ubiquitous IPA? Surely one of the GK imitations of Speckled Hen must be on sale?"

"Not here," I was told by Tom Phillips one of the regulars seated at the bar. He recommended the Jorvik Blonde and I must say it suited my palate very well.

"The CIC made a collective decision not to stock IPA", explained Tom Canning, chef and manager, "It is available in most of the other pubs in the area and we thought offering a choice might encourage people to drink here. We do, though, buy from the

Greene King beer list. We sell Hardy and Hansen as our stock beer and the other two pumps change depending on what is available."

"Who or what," I asked, "is the CIC?"

We sat at with our beers in the roomy conservatory and Tom Canning told me the tale:

When Ro Asplin, the long serving landlady, announced her retirement in March 2012, the villagers felt themselves left in a dilemma. For various reasons the pub had not been making a great deal of money, and there were concerns that like most large corporate companies Greene King would take advantage of Ro's retirement to completely change the pub. Fears were that it would be "updated" in some way; that managers would be appointed and that the Greene King stock menu of vacuum packed microwavable food and chips would be introduced in an attempt to maximise profit.

The Village and Pub regulars were aware that the pub had not been perhaps as busy as it might, but they considered the Plough and Fleece to be at the heart of their community, and felt that any improvements that needed to be made would be better managed by themselves.

In short – they decided to buy the pub.



A CIC, or Community Interest Company, a not-for-profit company, was set up and began to take pledges of cash. Investments are available for as little as £60, and the pledges soon edged towards £200,000, which is a sizable chunk of the £239,000

Things have gone a little awry

Greene King are asking for the freehold.

"I would like to emphasise how supportive Greene King have been throughout this process," Tom Canning went on to say, "I couldn't fault them."

On the strength of the £200,000 pledge the company gave the CIC a short-term lease. The keys were handed over on September 6th, and the intention is that, given time, the villagers will be able to buy the pub freehold.

But, unfortunately things have gone a little awry.

"To receive so many promises of money was unbelievable," Tom said, "Unfortunately, promises are not the same as cash and we have only collected about half of the expected funds."

Like any business that has shareholders to appease, Greene King is keen to keep the pub on the market, and there is a possibility that the villagers could be gazumped at any time.

"Could you pass on the message to those who have made a pledge? Could we have the money now?"

"Could you also let people know that we are still asking for investment? We are spreading the field a little wider and asking users of the pub who live in other villages to invest. We have also approached The National Lottery Village SOS fund for financial support."

"Excuse me, Tom." We were interrupted by a craggy faced gentleman dressed in a 70's style denim suit, "I've dropped off the tomatoes and home grown chillies I promised."

Tom thanked him and then explained:
"Some of our regulars like to bring in fresh

produce for the kitchen."

The evening closes in and as more customers arrive there is a vibrant feel about the pub. Everyone is talking about the mammoth effort they have put in getting the pub the way they like it.

"It has taken 15 weeks," Tom told me. "16 regular volunteers have been doing everything from cleaning and decorating to designing websites, and working in the garden."

Volunteers also help out in the day to day running of the pub. Tom Phillips, a stone mason during the day, helps out in the kitchen 3-4 nights a week.

And the formula seems to work.

"There has been an unbelievable turnaround in trade." Tom Canning again, "Villagers who haven't set foot in the pub for years have begun to return. Real Ale trade is especially good - accounting for over 20% of our total sales."



"As well as the Tuesday quiz we have an acoustic musician's Jam Session every Thursday, and 2-3 bands play live music every 2nd Friday of the month."

All of these entertainments are run on a voluntary basis

I left the Plough and Fleece as the quiz was about to begin.

"By the way", Tom Phillips called after me, "You ought to report that we must be the

The Heart of the Community

only pub in Cambridgeshire where the toilets are cleaned by a world famous musician – that's why we have those fancy paper towels."



I agree with the Horningsea villagers. I have always believed that the village pub is, and will always be, at the heart of the village community.

They, however, have embraced this belief and taken it one step further. In their case, in many ways the pub is the community.

I very much hope that the CIC are able to overcome their current financial difficulties and that the money so readily pledged begins to appear. If they do, I'm sure the pub will flourish, and I expect that I will be returning to the Plough and Fleece in 12 months time judging it as a possible candidate for entry into the CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

For more information about the Plough and Fleece, Horningsea including the Horningsea Community Interest Company go to www.ploughandfleece.com

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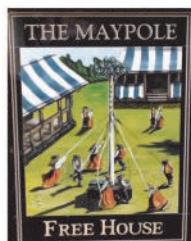
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Interim Planning Policy Guidance:

Planning policy, and a recognition of its current failure to protect pubs from closure or change of use, has been evolving fast in the city of Cambridge and is continuing to do so.

In March 2012 the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect. Amongst other things this framework says that planning authorities should "plan positively for community facilities (it specifically mentions pubs) and to guard against unnecessary losses".

As highlighted in the last edition of ALE the framework has already helped to potentially save pubs on our patch, and in Cambridge the City Councillors have considered policies intended to build on the NPPF.

But will these policies go far enough? And will pubs currently under threat and facing future threat be saved?

Earlier this year, in response to public concerns over the number of pub closures in Cambridge, Cambridge City Council commissioned a survey of the city's pubs and in May released a draft Interim Planning Policy Guidance (IPPG) with a view to the protection of Public Houses in the City of Cambridge

The IPPG is a list of proposals aimed at protecting pubs including:

- a) Planning permission for the redevelopment of pubs and former pubs could be refused unless they had been marketed for 12 months as a pub, free of tie, at a price decided by an independent professional valuer.
- b) A developer has to show that reasonable efforts have been made to preserve a pub, or former pub; that adequate alternative pub provision existed locally, and that the local community no longer needed it.

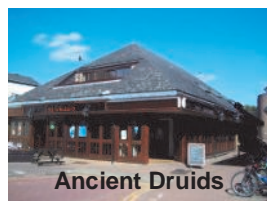
At first glance, when we received the proposals over a month previously, it seemed that there was good reason to celebrate.

However, on looking more closely, we realized that the proposed IPPG would only apply to changes to pub premises that required planning permission.

Many of the pubs we are trying to protect are now either restaurants (the **Cross Keys**, **Ancient Druids**), offices (the **Rose & Crown**) or shops (the **Royal Standard**). These are all changes of use that can be undertaken without the need to seek council planning permission.



In April 2012, Cambridge & District CAMRA



highlighted the loss of so many city pubs by organising and publicising a "Tour of Destruction". Of the 23 closed and

threatened pubs we visited on that tour 8 had been lost to uses that did not require planning permission and therefore would not be protected by the new IPPG policy.

In our response to the IPPG proposal, we welcomed the initiative but pointed out its failings. Together with fellow campaign group



Cambridge Past, Present and Future, we urged the City Council to make an Article 4 Direction.

Article 4 directions are usually made when

A good start but it's not enough

the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened. They are most common in conservation areas.

However, we argued that the same direction could be issued by Cambridge City Council, who have, in accordance with the government NPPF, already acknowledged the importance of Cambridge community pubs, to ensure that changes of use of pubs to shops, offices and restaurants would require the same scrutiny and give the same protection to pubs as if they were to be developed as housing.

In addition to giving a formal written response to the IPPG we lobbied all the city councillors, explaining the reasons why we felt their policy fell short of the mark and why it didn't offer pubs the protection they claimed it did. I, representing CAMRA, and Nigel Bell from Cambridge Past, Present and Future, attended the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee, on Tuesday 9th October, where we were allowed to put forward our case.

Since April 2012 and the CAMRA "Tour of Destruction" a further five pubs have closed in the city. Two of those closures (**The Jolly Scholar** and **The Alexandra Arms**) are hopefully short-term.

We naively believed that another two (**The Osborne Arms** and **The Ranch**) would require planning permission if the developers were to proceed with their plans.



The **Osborne Arms** has now been demolished – a “mistake” by the developer who hadn't realized that the pub was subject to a conservation order.

The fifth pub is **The Bird (in Hand)** on Newmarket Road.



Sold by Greene King to a developer, The Bird is closed and is threatened with conversion into

an estate agent.

Although leading to the loss of a pub, this change of use does not require planning permission, so The Bird is not protected by The City Council's IPPG.

The community formerly served by the Bird was not primarily a geographical one. What drew most of its customers was their sexuality. It was the only LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender) pub in Cambridge-shire.

The ex landlord of The Bird informed us that in his view the pub was a financially viable business and that, freed from tie to Greene King, it promised to be even more successful. Failures in the IPPG may well have resulted in the unnecessary loss of this valuable community facility.

Just suppose the owners of the only pub in your area decided to convert it into a shoe shop. The IPPG as drafted would be powerless to stop it. It is our view, we said, that in such a case, and in the case of The Bird, City Councillors would be hard pressed to find an answer if asked to show that they had carried out the NPPF obligation to “plan positively for community facilities (it specifically mentions pubs) and to guard against unnecessary losses”.

We argued that an Article 4 Directive would protect pubs and would ensure that the City Council's NPPF obligation is met.

I'm pleased to say that to a some extent the

The tide may be turning...

Councillors agreed with our point of view, and voted unanimously to accept the IPPG. They also determined that "strong consideration" would be given to the use of Article 4 where pubs are not already protected by a conservation order.

There are several instances that show the tide may be turning against the wanton destruction of city pubs in Cambridge. In some recent planning applications affecting pubs, councillors have rejected planning applications despite council officers recommending acceptance. When these decisions have gone to appeal the inspectors have rejected the appeals.



Osborne Arms

Unfortunately there are also instances, such as **The Osborne**, that show it may be too late, and even with the IPPG may not be enough.

We applaud our city councillors for the decisions they have made so far. There is no doubt that some pubs have been saved by their actions. But we would also have liked to have seen the Article 4 Directive used as a matter of course rather than remain a consideration.

Ali Cook

Contact details for Cambridge City Councillors can be found: www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/about-the-council/councillors/

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Mission to Newmarket

Such is the reputation of Newmarket pubs in Bury St Edmunds that one of our Usual Suspects decided not to bother coming when he learned of our destination; not a single pub in the GBG. It's certainly true that the crew assembled at the Bury St Edmunds Transporter Station were not overly flushed with expectation.

On beaming down we were met by Matt and Sam who were to be our guides in this strange Newmarket world and help us to seek out new beer and new drinking situations. We went boldly...

First up was **The Bull**, a generally well appointed GK pub with some questionable upholstery. Featured on the bar was Bull Best Bitter (3.9%) made, apparently, especially for the pub and quite tasty. According to our mole at the Westgate Brewery this is a beer brewed for selected GK houses and is badged for the particular pub; like Gandalf, it has many names. Best received was the Golden Hen (4.1%): why do GK bother with IPA Gold (4.1%)? A pleasant place for a drink; the courtyard is well worth a look.

Next was **The Golden Lion**, a Wetherspoon's with, for once, a good range of beers (is it just us or are GK starting to crowd the pumps in many of these establishments?). Bunkerhill Bitter (5%), a strong brown

beer from Summerskills Brewery, Devon went down well but star of the show and the generally agreed Beer of the Day was Icarus (4.5%) from Somerset's Blindman Brewery; it reminded some of us of an old fashioned Mild & Bitter. The real surprise, however, was hidden at the bottom of a fridge: Gwynt y Ddraig's Black Dragon Cider (6.5%)! Perhaps they think there's no demand for it – come on Wetherspoon's, flaunt it for goodness sake! Overall, a pretty good 'Spoons that is, at least in our guides' opinion, the most improved pub in Newmarket over the last couple of years.

On down the High Street to **The White**



Hart, a rather swish looking Marston's house. The long bar is nice to see but you couldn't call it

traditional looking. The crew enjoyed lunch here while finding the Pedigree (4.5%) was disappointing, we suspect due more to nostalgia for the 1970's version reasons than the actual quality of the pint served. The Hobgoblin (5.2%) was certainly in good nick and was duly gobbled.

At this point our hosts played their joker and off we taxied on a side trip to Exning, a small village a few minutes out of town. First stop here was The White Swan, a spacious pub with a lovely beer garden and a telly not showing the racing. Scotland 0, Serbia 0 – perhaps the gee-gees aren't so bad. Two of our number took refuge at the dart board. On the bar we had Caledonian Flying Scotsman (4%) and Up the Swanny (4.3% - at least on this occasion). The variable ABV is due to the non-existence of an actual beer called Up the Swanny, the

house mystery beers rotate to keep the regulars alert. We're still guessing and Matt isn't telling. Either way, good beer, nice pub.

Just up the road we found The White Horse, a Punch Tavern and the only pub on our itinerary in the GBG. Shepherd Neame Spitfire (4.5%), Timothy Taylor Landlord (4.3%) and Woodforde's Wherry (3.8%) greeted us; we can vouch for the first two. Sitting outside on what looked like an abandoned (but wonderfully comfortable) leather sofa there was a real risk of being woken up by the crisp dawn air. Worse things could have happened. We really wouldn't want to have to choose between The Horse and Swan; in fact "we don't see how you could go to one without going to the other".

Back into Newmarket and The Wagon and Horses for a quick one before the Transporter Station closed. The usual GK house offerings were available and generally well received although the beer temperature made us all realise just how right The Swan had got it.

So, at the Bar Base debriefing, what did we conclude? Paradise regained? Well, no, but certainly not the beer wasteland of Bury St Edmunds mythology. We didn't have a bad pint all day and found some very pleasant watering holes. As regards the town, it must be said that Wetherspoon's is doing the most to put Newmarket on the map; they also provided the day's only real cider. If you are guilty, as we all certainly were, of writing off Newmarket without a look, then perhaps it's time to take the trip. Over to you.

Many thanks to Matt and Sam for a splendid day out, and, of course, to Chris for his networking.

Andrew Land - 29/9/12

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Border Crossing

Campaigning trip to Fordham, Burwell and back to Exning

Intrepid Real Ale Explorer Matthias Miller lends us a live action page from his diary.

22.09.2012 early evening. Not Wet.

Heading off cycling from Newmarket towards Snailwell on another real ale campaigning trip.

Passing **The George and Dragon** in **Snail-**



well, this pub has the largest garden out of any of the pubs in the Newmarket area. It extends as far back as the stream, which brings much nature and wildlife with it. Great for children (though not on their own if young) or just anyone that wants to get away from it all. Two or three real ales always on cask.

The first stop on this trip is **The Crown, Fordham**. Very nice pub, with a warm welcoming atmosphere. Owned by Greene King (GK). This pub serves food, but also



has a burger van in the car park ideal for takeaways. Good sized rear garden. Greene King IPA (3.7%) on with a changing guest beer. Currently Farriers best bitter (3.9%) from the Coach House Brewery.

Next stop is **The Chequers** in **Fordham**. A



more modern looking pub, food orientated specialising in Indian food. Adnams best bitter pump "wasn't working" the only alternative is Nethergate Growler Bitter (3.9%). Good pint, served just a tad cold at around 7 degrees C. Also a bit pricey (for out here) at £3.35 a pint.

A short cycle ride over to **Burwell**, the third stop is at **The Anchor**. A Classic old look-



ing pub with traditional wooden beams across the ceiling. Very cozy place with a wel-

coming atmosphere. Food orientated with cutlery on pretty much every table, so not ideal for drinkers, but worth a look in.

Beer range looked rather good. Anchor best bitter at 3.9% brewed by GK especially for this pub. Go for the Elgoods Indian Summer (4.8%) and a top pint this is. Ruddles Best Bitter (3.7%) and Woodforde's Wherry (3.8%) are also available.

Fourth stop, just around the corner is **The**

Fox also in **Burwell**. Here there are 5 pumps available, including Thwaites Original (3.6%), Woodforde's Wherry (3.8%) Bartrams Red



Queen (3.9%) and Bartram Virgo. I sample the Bartrams Red Queen and it is a top pint. Very fresh, put on yesterday. A good drinking hole with diners and drinkers kept separate. Also adjacent and connected is an Indian restaurant, which also looks impressive.



On to **The White Swan** in **Exning**. One of our favourite pubs, a good village drinking hole, but close to Newmarket. Two

real ales on, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber (4.4%) and 'Up the Swanny' (unknown). The Lancaster is served at the perfect temperature and full of flavour. A few of these go down nicely.

Finally just up the road to **The White Horse** in **Exning**. 5



pumps on here, including Courage Directors, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Woodforde's

Wherry. Try the Directors (4.8%) and this is a very good pint. Busy place on a Saturday night with plenty of drinkers. Great pub.

Drinks are also well priced here.

Look out for more pages from Matt's diary in future editions of ALE.

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Taking the fight for the Great British pub to Parliament

In difficult financial times when pubs are closing at a rate of 12 per week, when beer duty continues to rise, and when developers are doing away with well run community pubs against the wishes of local communities, wouldn't it be great to know that there is a group of over 100 Parliamentarians fighting for licensees, brewers and pub-goers? Well, there is! There are now 128 MPs and Lords in the Save the Pub Group, and with each new member, there is a new voice championing the cause of the nation's ale- and pub-lovers.

The group believe that traditional British pubs, which provide an environment for sociable and controlled drinking, are hugely important to their communities as a focus for community, social, sporting and charitable activities. This is why the Group is profoundly concerned that much loved and valued pubs across the country are being closed, for many different reasons, when often they don't need to; and why they demand greater Government support and better legislation.

The Save the Pub Group, with the support of CAMRA, gives MPs help and guidance in support of campaigns against pub closures in their constituency, but mostly campaign on a number of key issues affecting pubs and beer. Currently, the group are calling for:

- changes to planning law to properly recognise the importance of pubs to communities, and to better protect pubs faced with closure & redevelopment;
- a change in the law to outlaw the practice of restrictive covenants, whereby companies are selling pubs on the basis that they are prevented from being a pub, thus denying communities pubs simply to benefit the commercial interests of the company;
- local communities to have the right to buy pubs that are planned for closure, with im-

provements to the Localism Act provisions, and to support the Pub is the Hub scheme.

- reform of the current 'beer tie' model, as operated by some of the big pubcos, which makes it impossible for many licensees to make a living, and which leaves many pubs which could be successful if free of tie unviable. The Group held a high profile reform rally as well as a meeting with big pubco bosses to hold them to account;
- fairer levels of beer duty, scrapping the duty escalator and pushing for a lower duty on all draught ale and/or real ale, lobbying Europe to allow this;
- the Government and local authorities to do more to support community pubs including via taxation and rates, based on the community value of such pubs and for less complicated regulatory and licensing systems and frameworks;
- the Government to look at supermarket beer pricing, to stop below cost selling in the off trade and create a more level playing field between the on and off trade;

Mike Benner, National Chief Executive of the Campaign for Real Ale, reckons that *"the Group is invaluable in helping to build Parliamentary support for CAMRA's key campaigns to protect pubs. I hope that CAMRA members up and down the country will encourage their MP to join the Group, and support their important work in protecting the future of Britain's valued community pubs."*

The Group ask you all to write to your local MP (who can be found at www.parliament.uk) and ask them to join the Group, to support its work, and to fight for pubs, brewers and beer-lovers across the country. Beyond that, the Group asks you to keep supporting your local CAMRA branch- and keep visiting the many wonderful real-ale pubs!

Tucking Inn - Will's Foodie Page

There can be no doubt that many aspects go into making a good pub an excellent pub. Top of the list, of course, we must have quality, well kept beer. Ambience, is also important: A warm welcome, and a feeling that you are more than just a punter.

Increasingly though, people are also being attracted by good quality nourishing pub food.

Cambridge is blessed with a number of excellent pubs many of them employing talented chefs, serving excellent food. It makes sense given it's availability that quite a lot of Chef signature dishes use real ale to add flavour and liquid to a recipe. I've made it my mission to seek out some of these dishes, and have asked the Chefs' permission to publish their recipes in ALE.

Nathan Phelps is the Chef at The Maypole, Park Street, Cambridge.

He makes extensive use of the variety of 8 Beers that are always on tap. This melt in the mouth beef pie, with accompanying rich gravy, uses Milton Brewery Nero, a dark stout which adds depth of colour and flavour to what might otherwise be considered a simple dish.

Unfortunately, when trying out this recipe I could not find Nero in bottles so I substituted Cambridge Moonshine brewery Black Hole Stout, which works very well if your local off license doesn't have Nero on tap.

Cooking the beef for 6 hours may seem excessive but it's well worth the wait.

If you really can't bear to wait, this pie is on the Maypole menu almost every day.

NATHAN'S PIE RECIPE (Makes 6-8)

Ingredients for the filling:

1 pint of NERO from Milton brewery
1kg diced chuck steak (beef)
1kg chopped button mushrooms
4 large carrots diced
2 Oxo beef stock cubes.
A few sprigs of fresh thyme
Oregano
Worcester sauce
Olive oil

Method

1. Marinate the beef in a generous splash of olive oil and Worcester sauce along with the oregano and crumbled stock cube for 1 hour (overnight preferably).
2. Sauté the mushrooms in a large heavy based pot in olive oil. Add the fresh thyme when the mushrooms start to colour.
3. Add the beef, the marinade and the chopped carrots. Stir over a high heat for 5-10 minutes until all the meat is sealed.
4. Add ALL the NERO bring to the boil and turn down to a very gentle simmer.
5. Make up 1 pint of very very thick gravy using granules. Add this to the pot and cook as long as possible on the lowest heat possible. Stirring occasionally. I cook mine for a minimum of six hours. 2 hours should be enough. Make sure the meat melts in your mouth.
6. Drain all the contents of the pot into a large colander. Use the liquid as gravy.
7. Roll out puff or short crust pastry (I prefer Jusroll puff pastry) into 0.5 centimetre thick sheets and cut into 15x15cm squares.
8. Place a healthy amount of the chilled filling into the middle of each square and fold the four corners up so they overlap to form a sealed parcel.
9. Brush liberally with egg wash and bake in a pre-heated oven at gas mark 6 or 190 degrees centigrade or 400 degrees Fahrenheit for 15-20 minutes or until they are golden brown.
10. Serve with a pint of NERO or three.

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