

FREE



HERTFORDSHIRE Pints of View



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Winter Edition 2023

Issue No. 308



*(Except for
wasted beer...)*



*Maybe, DAISY
can help ???*



*"Festival's
GREAT!"*



Specials in this issue:

**Beer duty changes - what a waste...
John Lightfoot RIP - remembered
GBG2024 - Hertfordshire 'ins'**



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Campaign for Real Ale

John Lightfoot R.I.P.

It was with much regret, and deep sadness, that the branch announced the death of John Lightfoot on Thursday 28th September. He was treasurer of both the branch and beer festival for over two decades. John had been ill for the last couple of years with Acute myeloid leukaemia. Despite this battle, he still managed to find time to attend both Branch, Committee and Festival meetings, when well enough. John was nothing but to the point, no wishy washy, just factual, which gained him admiration from a lot of people.

His quick decision-making ability, and a focus on common sense, made him the unique individual he was. Both locally and nationally, he was held in very high regard for his accounting.

The branch and CAMRA have lost an individual who was quite quiet, however his passion for the Branch and St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival knew no bounds. The fact that John's family chose to attend the festival only days after his death was such a fitting tribute.

Earlier this year, John became the 15th recipient of the Dave Burns Memorial Award, which I know meant a lot to him. The South Herts Branch set up the award to honour those special individuals who have made a significant contribution to the real ale cause in Hertfordshire.

John's funeral on Friday 20th October, was attended by a large group of South Herts / Festival friends, who gathered together near Wokingham with John's family and other



John raising a glass... and a smile!



John's family at St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival 2023

friends, to say goodbye to a unique and much respected person, the like of which we will not see again.

For those who are reading this and were unaware, please raise a glass, and salute someone who always put other people first, without seeking or wanting the limelight. Today, John, you are in the limelight for all the right reasons. Thank you for everything you have done.

John Tubridy
South Herts CAMRA



South Herts CAMRA members at John's funeral

Starting Pint

Are you reading this in a dimly lit pub? Do you notice anything different when compared with previous issues? Well, we're now using a slightly larger font, so if reading *Pints of View* still gives you a headache, it must be the content or, perhaps, you've drunk too much?

More significant changes to the Winter 2023 edition concern the editorial 'department'.

Joint Editor since PoV305, Dean Barrett has stood down; not because of 'editorial differences', but because he's run out of hours-in-a-day since being elected to both CAMRA's National Executive and Chair of North Herts Branch. Thanks, Dean, for your assistance over the last three issues and for agreeing to remain the magazine's webmaster.

And thanks, also, Mr Bury for continuing to pen Steve's Shout, despite being elected Chair of Swale Branch and writing for your new local magazine East Kent Drinker, with all that entails.

PoV308 Highlights

Actually, not a highlight at all, but this edition is the first since the very sad passing of our dear respected friend, long-term South Herts CAMRA Branch and St. Albans Beer Festival Treasurer, John Lightfoot. You may already have read the touching obituary opposite written by another stalwart of our branch, Beer Festival Organiser, John Tubridy. Despite being in my (earlyish) 60s, I'm a relative CAMRA newbie; joining South Herts only eight years ago. However, the comparatively short time that I knew John was long enough for him to make a strong and positive impression on me, setting an example with his calm, honest, no-BS approach, coupled with extreme humility. Like many, I miss him.

Back to PoV, and one subject that makes it onto the cover and into both **Campaign Column** and **Steve's Shout** is the new draught-duty legislation which has resulted in take-outs



being banned and beer being binned. If you feel as strongly about it as we do, you'll write to *your* MP and ask him or her to petition the government.

You might notice in this edition some new sections, which are listed in the contents as 'Specials', but might become Regulars:

Wethereport - JD Wetherspoon are a tad controversial amongst

CAMRA membership, if not within the organisation's National Executive. I make no secret of being a fan of the company. Do they get everything right? Of course not, and I'm sure they wouldn't claim to! However, I prefer to applaud the chain for championing Real Ale, providing a national outlet for small breweries and investing heavily in its pubs, rather than criticise it with allegations of serving out-of-date beer, holding a knife to the throats of suppliers and causing the closure of swathes of independent pubs.

Travelwatch - unless you live in the centre of St. Albans or Hertford (I don't) you're likely to need transport of some sort for any meaningful 'Cup Brawl' (HQ prefers we don't use the anagrammatic alternative). In this issue, John Crowhurst explains the various ticketing options that can significantly bring down the price of bus travel within (and just outside) Hertfordshire. And money saved on transport means more to spend on beer (or cider)!

Finally, I can't sign-off without mentioning 'Sam Hall', whose letter critiquing a quiet pub in a leafy Hertfordshire village caused quite a storm when published in **Readers Write** last issue. To find out more, turn to the new-for-this-issue section entitled **Reader's Wrong?** And if you, too, have an opinion that might pique the interest of other beer drinkers and pub goers, do please send me an email (...not a WhatsApp!).

Paul Donatantonio
Editor

Campaign Column

Ecologically Disastrous Draught Duty rules - Urgent action needed

Back in August, the government announced, with great fanfare, that pubs would continue to be allowed to sell take-out beer after 1 September.

Unsurprisingly, many understand this to be a reversal of the government's effective banning of take-outs from 1 August, when the new alcohol duty regime was introduced.

In fact there has been no reversal; just an opportunity for Licensing Law to be confused with Excise Duty.

Licensing Law brought in during COVID when we were forbidden from entering pubs, allowed them to sell take-out beer.

Alcohol Duty changes brought in 1 August give preferential rates for draught beer consumed in pubs, but higher (standard) rates for take-out.

To be very clear, despite the duty changes being heralded as a *reduction* in the rate payable on draught beer, in reality, for most strengths of beer, the duty has merely been held at previous levels.

Maybe next issue I will insert a table showing the excise duty and VAT payable on a range of ABVs.

The upshot of all this complicated nonsense is, not only are pubs effectively forbidden from selling draught beer in take-out containers, **BEER FESTIVALS ARE FORBIDDEN FROM GIVING IT AWAY AND MUST RESORT TO POURING GREAT BEER DOWN THE DRAIN;** as shown on this issue's front cover.

Hence my letter to festival-supporter Daisy Cooper, Liberal Democrat MP for St. Albans, asking her to continue working with CAMRA lobbying parliament to get this ridiculous law changed.

Paul Donatantonio
Editor

Dear Daisy

It was lovely to see and hear you open our Festival, once again. Thank you!

Just a shame that a great four days at the Alban Arena came to an unhappy end with the pouring away of perfectly good beer, due to the government's ill-conceived decision to ban 'take-away containers'.

About 230 unpaid volunteers worked the festival and, had each been thanked with a couple of pints to take home, more than six firkins (432 pints) would not have been wasted. Whilst a lot of beer, six firkins does represent only 2% of the 300 brought-in for the 5,000+ festival goers.

Of course, St. Albans is but one of 180+ CAMRA-organised festivals and so the total volume of beer being forcibly fed to the country's sewers will not be hundreds of pints, but tens of thousands. Scandalous.

The assistance that you are giving to CAMRA and pubs - and exemplified by your recent tabling of Parliamentary Questions to the Chancellor of the Exchequer - is very much appreciated.

Please do not give up on the struggle to get legislation aligned with what, surely, was the original intention of all concerned.

160,000 CAMRA members will be right behind you, along with many more in the pub trade.

Cheers!

Steve's Shout

Watering down the Worker's Beer

It has been reported that beer prices have risen 11% in recent months meaning a lot of pints in Hertfordshire are now priced the wrong side of £5. Not good when we are in the grips of an economic crisis.

Other brewers want to boost their profits without increasing retail prices. So how do they do it? Simple! Water the beer down and call it 'drinkflation'.



publicly said they preferred weaker beer during the summer months. If that's the case, they should drink Master Brew 3.7% from May to September.

A reader of Swale's local paper the "Times Guardian" has calculated that an ABV reduction of 0.1% equates to a penny per pint ie. 3p on every pint of Spitfire. A small amount? Not when you realise that if every brewer reduced their

beer strengths by 0.3% the total tax saved would be £250million per annum.

As I have highlighted in *Pints of View*, before, John Smith's Smooth, Wells Bombardier, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Greene King Old Speckled Hen had their draught beer ABV (alcohol by volume) cut, but none had the price reduced to recognise that less excise duty and VAT was being paid. No wonder brewers are happy to reduce beer strengths!

In August this year, there were changes to the alcohol duty system, but rest assured that this will not reduce the total amount that comes into the Chancellor's coffers. One of the changes reduces the duty on draught beer and cider but bans it from being sold for consumption off the premises. The ban extends to Beer Festivals and, needless to say, CAMRA is campaigning for legislation changes to allow draught take-aways again.

It was a key aim when setting up CAMRA over 50 years ago that alcohol levels of beer were made public – some keg beers being brewed at the time were so weak they could have been sold in America during prohibition!

Let's focus on the most recent ABV reductions. The latest brewer to reduce alcohol strengths of draught beer is Shepherd Neame of Faversham, Kent, who has gleefully announced that, following surveys, they could reduce the strength of Spitfire from 4.5% to 4.2% and Bishops Finger from 5.4% to 5.2%. Shep's had even found two misguided drinkers who

Shep's are not alone. Speckled Hen was once a 6.2% beer when originally brewed by Morland's in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, to celebrate 50 years of MG car production. However, since buying and closing Morlands, Greene King have dropped the ABV and are now doing so once again; this time from 5.0% to 4.8%. For those who don't know, the Speckled Hen name is derived from "The Old Speckled Un"; a pre-war sports car with wire wheels and a canvas bonnet that became speckled with paint during the car's time as the MG company's factory run-around!

So why should we in CAMRA be worried? It is the reductions in strength of the naturally conditioned beers that is of concern. The government is letting the brewers water down the worker's pint to appease the anti-alcohol lobby, whilst accepting the loss of excise duty for low percentage ABV beers. Moreover, to further appease the lobby and at the same time claw back the lost duty, the rate for high percentage ABV beers is increasing massively (by nearly 15%), which we can expect to see reflected in prices at the bar.

These are worrying times for all beer drinkers.

Steve Bury
Chairman
Swale CAMRA

Pubs in Town

A NEW PUB GUIDE



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South Herts Awards 2023

Along with every other branch across the country, South Herts CAMRA awards titles for its Pub of the Year (PotY), Club of the Year (CotY) and Cider Pub (or Club) of the Year (CiderPotY) – and 2023 has been no exception.

These competitions are the first stage of what are ultimately national contests. Winners of branch competitions go through to county and regional stages, before a list of national finalists is drawn up and then a winner chosen.

Pub of the Year

PotY has been running since 1988, and the competition helps to showcase the very highest quality pubs around the UK. Pubs are assessed on a range of criteria including beer quality, customer service, community focus, facilities and cleanliness. Last year's national winner was the Tamworth Tap in the West Midlands – definitely worth a visit if you are in that part of the country.

But anyway, back to South Herts... and we



South Herts CAMRA Chair Ian Boyd, with Mermaid Licensees John Cusworth and Mark Powell

were delighted to award this year's **bronze certificate** to the **Mermaid in St. Albans**. An excellent, traditional free house, run for more than 10 years by John Cusworth and Mark Powell, the Mermaid is well known to real ale fans far beyond its city-centre locality.

As well as putting a firm focus on a rotating and high quality beer and cider range throughout the year, the Mermaid is also famed for its

The Mermaid



CASK ALE - CRAFT BEER - REAL CIDER

themed summer beer festivals and its annual cider and perry festival held every May.

While placed third in the overall South Herts competition, the Mermaid was our highest scoring pub in St. Albans – another CAMRA certificate to go on the wall alongside many others!

Taking **second place** was the **Crooked Billet in Ware**. A former winner, the pub has now attained Silver three years on the trot.



Mayor Thomas Day, Billet Landlady Bev Gefaell and South Herts CAMRA's Joe Saunders

The Crooked Billet is on Musley Hill in the north of the town and is well worth the 11-12 minute walk up from the town centre – find New Road and keep walking, or jump on a 395 bus alighting at Homefield Road (the Billet is 150 yards round the corner).

With a strong pedigree for well-kept cask beer, the “Billet” is popular with both the local community and visitors coming from far and wide. A warm welcome is assured and landlady Bev Gefaell also opens the pub doors for a number of out-of-hours community groups.

In her four years at the pub, Bev has presented a huge selection of cask beers – you will always find two or three, sourced from all over Britain. At weekends one is often a dark ale – a mild, stout or porter.

And the pub also stages an annual beer festival – which, this year, we used as an opportunity to present their latest certificate, in the presence of the Mayor of Ware, Thomas Day.

On receiving the award from South Herts CAMRA's Joe Saunders, Bev said: *“My pub is really about the people who come to use it.*

I'm so grateful for their continuing support and friendship – that is absolute gold to me - and I'd like to once again thank CAMRA for this award”.

But the **overall winner** of this year's title, taking **gold**, was the **Woodman in Wild Hill**; an outstanding rural pub, with a fine selection of at least five cask ales including four guests. The Woodman has now been awarded PotY a remarkable 13 times and is a must-visit for



Photo: Terry Richards

Woodman Licensees Vicky and Tom Craig, with South Herts CAMRA Chair Ian Boyd

THE WOODMAN

— WILD HILL —

Free House

**South Herts Pub of the Year
2023 and 12 times previously**

5 Real Ales inc. 4 guests





Wildhill, Nr Hatfield AL9 6EA
01707 642618
www.thewoodman.uk



anyone who enjoys great cask ale and warm hospitality.

Landlord Tom Craig laid on free pizza at a special event to mark the occasion, and it was great to be able to use this wonderful celebration as an opportunity to present the trophy, once again!

Ian Boyd, Chairman of South Herts CAMRA, said: *"The Woodman is a unique and much-*






Photo: Terry Richards

loved pub, that is a worthy winner of this very closely-fought competition. The Woodman is great because, while it has moved with the times and continued to develop and improve over the years, it has done so while holding on to the traditions that its locals love it for. Huge congratulations to them, and if you haven't paid a visit you are missing out!"

Club of the Year


CAMRA also campaigns to protect and promote clubs, which are important community assets that promote the social wellbeing of their local area. The CotY Year competition is run in conjunction with Club Mirror magazine with the simple aim of finding the best clubs with the greatest commitment to quality real ale – those which offer a fantastic atmosphere, welcoming surroundings and most importantly, top quality real ale served in great condition. The reigning national champion is the Marden Village Club in Kent.

In South Herts, the **Hertford Club** picked up this year's **bronze award**. This private members club, based at Lombard House, Bull Plain, for 126 years, has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, often opening its doors to the


THE HERTFORD CLUB

Dating in parts from the 15th century and a Grade II* listed building, Lombard House has been a Private Members Club since 1897



Up to 4 hand pumps
plus Real Cider and/or Perry
CAMRA Good Beer Guide since 2014

Winter is upon us, why not come and relax with us in a warm and friendly environment – there's always something going on



New members are currently welcome although we are quickly becoming full

CAMRA members may be signed in on production of their CAMRA membership card

Lombard House, Bull Plain, HERTFORD SG14 1DT
01992 421422

public on special town occasions and to its own special events. The Club's annual Literary Festival, held in early June, this year included a talk from actor Neil Pearson speaking on Madly Deeply, The Alan Rickman Diaries. The Club hosts a fortnightly Folk Club on Wednesdays and rock nights on alternate Thursdays. Hertford Chess Club meets on Tuesdays.



South Herts CAMRA's Les Middlewood and Hertford Club Manager Aiden Perrins

The Grade II* listed and timbered building dates from the 15th century and incorporates many later additions and alterations. Inside, the bar features two or three changing cask ales and traditional cider. The tranquil walled garden and terrace next to the River Lea offer a pleasant retreat in Hertford town centre. CAMRA members are welcome and may be signed-in on production of a membership card.

Silver went to the **North Mymms Social Club** and follows the club's gold award the previous year. The Club always has two changing cask ales available from a range of around a dozen – looked after by Bar Manager Michelle Collings.

A sizeable contingent of branch members travelled to the club for the presentation of its certificate and, on the night, those present were able to enjoy Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Timothy Taylor Boltmaker and Adnams Broadside. Michelle said she was delighted with this second award for the Club – particularly as this was her first year as Bar Manager.

CAMRA members are always welcome and a £2 guest donation is requested which goes towards the Club's annual children's and seniors' parties.



South Herts CAMRA Chair Ian Boyd and Clubs Officer Paul Woodhouse, flank Royston Club Manager Barrie Lloyd



North Mymms Social Club Vice Chair Dawn O'Gorman and Bar Manager Michelle Collings, with South Herts CAMRA Chair Ian Boyd

But the **gold award** this year went to the **Royston Social Club in St. Albans**. This unassuming, back-street club in College Road,



Happy Hour on a wide selection of drinks, including real ale at £2.50 a pint!

Card carrying CAMRA members welcome:
£2 charity donation requested



Sun - Thu: 12.00 - 23.00

Fri - Sat: 12.00 - 24.00

Happy Hour Mon - Thu: 17.00 - 19.00

Continuous rotation of great ales from a wide range of breweries

South Herts CAMRA Club of the Year 2022

facebook.com/NorthMymmsSocialClub/

The Royston Club

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01727 853656  **@roystonclub**

has come on leaps and bounds, achieving an appearance in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide for the first time this year.

While the Royston offers a range of activities you would expect from the best social clubs – from bingo, cribbage and dominos, to pool and bar billiards, to hosting local society meetings and live music - manager Barrie Lloyd has put a firm focus on real ale too, with a rotating selection of four now on offer, plus real cider and perry sometimes making an appearance.

South Herts branch clubs officer, Paul Woodhouse, said: *“The competition from the clubs was high and the result was very close within the top three. But the worthy winner was the Royston Club, so huge congratulations to Barrie and the team.”*

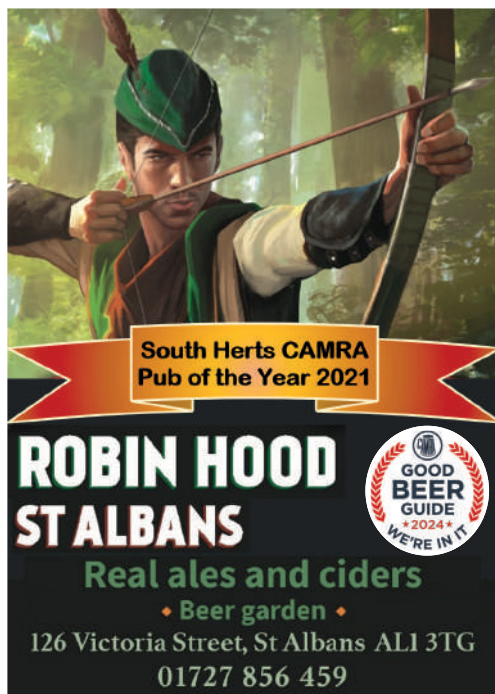
Cider Pub of the Year

Quite simply, the CiderPotY award recognises the best pubs and pubs that promote and encourage the sale of quality real cider and perry.

This year, we congratulate Landlord Jim Pratt and his team at the **Robin Hood in St. Albans** for taking yet another CAMRA award. This year saw them voted **South Herts Cider Pub of the Year 2023**, from the five pubs nominated.



St. Albans MP Daisy Cooper, with Robin Hood Licensees Liz Draper and Jim Pratt



Previously, the Robin Hood has been voted South Herts Pub of the Year and regularly appears in The Good Beer Guide. Now they have proved that, not only do they serve great beers, they also serve a cracking range of real (#NotFromConcentrate) ciders too! Jim regularly offers at least eight real and traditional ciders (ranging from sweet to dry), fruit ciders and perries.

The Award was presented, in front of many Robin Hood regulars, by St. Albans MP, Daisy Cooper; especially appropriate as she is a keen fan of cider!

**Ben Wilkinson, Keith Dixon,
Janet Tansley & Les Middlewood**
South Herts CAMRA

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Go straight to
camra.org.uk/join/

North Herts Awards 2023

Lordship Arms – North Herts CAMRA & Hertfordshire County Pub of the Year 2023

42 Whempstead Road, Benington, SG2 7BX

In August, the CAMRA North Herts committee presented Alan & Daphne Marshall with both their CAMRA North Hertfordshire Pub of the Year certificate & stag trophy [Ed: the branch trophy engraved with each successive PotY winner] and the CAMRA Hertfordshire County Pub of the Year certificate.

It was also the celebration of their 30 years at the pub, so triple congratulations!

The place was packed with well-wishing loyal customers, including locals, and regulars who travel many miles to enjoy the outstanding real ales and ciders along with the convivial welcome from the hosts and their team. Daphne put on a buffet spread for everyone and the happy couple cut a celebratory cake.

The Lordship Arms is a traditional English pub set at the heart of the quiet, historic Hertfordshire village of Benington, about 5 miles southeast of Stevenage.

The pub's website promises good conversation, whether you are in the bar, the beer garden or standing around the open fire on cold winter

nights. We've always found that to be the case.

The pub is also locally famous for its classic car meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month, Spring through Autumn, with a special on Boxing Day. Visitors are welcome to bring their own cars or just to admire!

But for CAMRA, it's the range and quality of ales – normally 7 to 8 – that keeps us going back time after time. Alan is, of course, a long-time CAMRA member with a real flair for keeping ale in pristine condition; hence the pub featuring numerous times on the branch stag and being a continuous Good Beer Guide entry.

Dean Barrett

North Herts CAMRA



Photo: Jeremy Kitson

North Herts CAMRA Chair Dean Barrett with Lordship Licensees Alan and Daphne Marshall

THE LORDSHIP ARMS

Repeat CAMRA Pub of the Year Winner
The Inn in the Sticks, Benington, Nr Stevenage



**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY
CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2023**

Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold
Black Sheep Best
Timothy Taylor's Landlord

Plus 5 changing guest beers from Independent
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Also Traditional Cider

See our selection of current & coming beers online

Lunchtime Snacks

Classic Car meetings 3rd Tue of mth Apr to Sep

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www.lordshiparms.co.uk

HEB Awards 2023

Have I Got Presentations for You

One benefit of being an active CAMRA member is rewarding the people and organisations who make it possible for us to go out and enjoy a good pint of beer, or cider/perry, if you are that way inclined. This is about entering beer scores on a regular basis, particularly for a new pub/club visited, or a new beer tasted. This is about going on brewery trips to meet the owner/brewer and going on annual branch/county/regional pub scoring trips. After all that, it is time to get out, present the awards and have some jolly good drinks, which is our reward!

Come 21st September, Herts & Essex Borders Branch (HEB) were out and about on a couple of socials, distributing awards and having drinks. The first coincided with heavy showers, blustery winds and lightning strikes from dark rolling clouds, when a hardly few braved the weather to visit **New River Brewery** in Hoddesdon. There to meet, greet, serve, and accept the award from Brewery Liaison Officer, Tim Vaughan, was owner/manager/deliverer and general 'bit of everything', our old friend John Bourdeaux; the award being **Silver for Blind Poet in Champion Beer of East Anglia 2023** (Session Stouts and Porters category). *[Ed: Hot on the heels of receiving the same award in 2022, that we reported on earlier this year in Pints of View 306].*



New River Owner John Bourdeaux and HEB CAMRA's Tim Vaughan

A week later on the 28th September, and this time in fine weather, a sober crowd set off by mini-bus to resume the awards trail. First stop was the **Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust**; originally a cricket club formed in 1825. Here, the branch chairman, Brendan Sothcott, presented the **HEB Club of the Year 2023 Award** to club chairman, Paul Carter, and the very important Richard Smith, cellarman of eight years, who has been making sure the beers are always in fine order.

There are always four guest real ales on tap; generally from local breweries. Payment is by card only and, being a 'sports' bar, there are big screens for live action. The club is open to the public and gives a discount for card-carrying CAMRA members.



HEB CAMRA Chair Brendan Sothcott with Bishop's Stortford Sports Club Chairman Paul Carter and Cellarman Richard Smith.

After a couple of fine beers, it was back on the bus and out into the dark wilds, down narrow country lanes to the privately owned **Queen's Head** at Allen's Green. There are four real ales on offer: two regulars; Timothy Taylor, Landlord and Dark Star, Hophead, plus two guests; one of which is always dark and, on the night, was Tring, Colley's Dog. However, despite the excellent choice of well-kept ales, the visit was to present two awards; both cider related. These were **HEB Cider Pub of the Year 2023** and **Hertfordshire Cider Pub of the Year 2023**. The owner/manager Cliff



Queen's Head Owner Cliff Caswell and HEB CAMRA Cider/Perry Officer Janet Bullerwell

Caswell's knowledge of apple cider and perry is matched by his enthusiasm. On the evening of the visit there were 31 on offer and the range will always cater for all tastes, from sweet to very dry.

After trying a selection of thirds, Janet Bullerwell, HEB Cider Officer, presented Cliff with two further awards to add to his collection. Cliff explained that, along with providing cider and perry from local producers, he, his team and a clutch of regular customers will often purchase a box of cider from a producer local to where they are on holiday and bring it back to sample and sell in the pub. Whether cider, perry or ale is your tippie, do visit the Queen's Head – you're unlikely to be disappointed!

Norman Samuels & Janet Bullerwell
Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA

East Anglia Region Cider Pub of the Year (CPotY) 2023 Why the secrecy???

It was back in April, that I and 15 other members of South Herts CAMRA stepped aboard a minibus for a tour of Hertfordshire involving the three branch winners of Cider Pub of the Year (CPotY) 2023:

Robin Hood, St. Albans – South Herts CAMRA
Queen's Head, Allen's Green – HEB CAMRA
Garden City Brewery & Bar, Letchworth Garden City – North Herts CAMRA

We were to judge the pubs by scoring each against eight criteria laid out on the CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR JUDGING FORM.

Scores were collected and an announcement made the following day; South Herts CAMRA had judged the Queen's Head to be County winner.

So far, so good.

Voting the pub of another branch number one is, surely, a great advert for both the competition and the integrity of the South Herts judging panel.

However, it was some time before I eventually

learned that the Queen's Head was Hertfordshire County CPotY 2023, had gone forward with five other county winners to compete for East Anglia Region Cider PotY, but had lost to the White Lion, Norwich which was awarded the Regional title.

Anyway, interested to find out about the scoring, I asked the Regional 'Powers':

- a. Who were the judges?
- b. How had the judging been conducted?
- c. What scores had been given?

I was somewhat taken aback to be told only that there were six judges: three from Essex, two from Suffolk and one from Norfolk. Neither their identities nor their scores would be divulged.

My question is a simple "why?".

Not only must the competition be fair, it must be *seen* to be fair and without full transparency that is just not possible.

Paul Donatantonio
Editor

Good Beer Guide

66 The Number of The Best!

Whilst I think that devoting the front cover of Good Beer Guide 2024 to a 70's heavy metal band is a travesty, there's nearly 1,000 pages inside, so plenty to enjoy! Fortunately, a more sober version of the cover is also available.



As far as Hertfordshire's 66 best pubs are concerned, highlights include:

Serial entrants

Rising Sun, High Wych, 50 consecutive entries
Lordship Arms, Benington, 30 consecutive entries

Queen's Head, Allen's Green, 20 consecutive entries

Star, Bishop's Stortford, 10th entry (not consecutive)

Horse and Groom, Hatfield, 10th entry (not consecutive)

New in this edition

Albert, Hitchin

Marquis of Granby, Harpenden

Royston Social Club, St. Albans

Two Trees Micro, Watford



Welcome back!

Three Hammers, Chiswell Green, after a 12 year gap
John Bunyan, Colman Green, after 28 years

Congratulations to all Hertfordshire pub/clubs that made it into the guide, and especially the Rising Sun. I do hope that Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA are planning some celebrations.

Bob Norrish

South Herts CAMRA

2024 Cover Banned? - No!

Out now with a controversial celebrity cover and foreword that's seen it flying off the shelves.

Bruce Dickinson is the celeb. Best known as the lead singer of British Heavy Metal Band, Iron Maiden, he's also been brewing in collaboration with Robinsons Brewery of Stockport since 2013.

Inside, on pages 57 to 65, you'll find the 66 pubs & bars in Hertfordshire who've consistently impressed members during the judging year with their ale. There are only spots for a small percentage of the country's pubs, so this is a real accolade. The very best will go on to be considered for each Hertfordshire CAMRA branch's Pub of the Year, and possibly progress all the way up to national Pub of the Year.

From page 65 to 67 you'll also find information about all of Hertfordshire's Breweries.

A wealth of other information includes a handy guide to beer styles, a summary of how beer is brewed, the campaigns behind the phrase 'Pubs, Pints, People' and, for each pub, a key to its features from meals to travel information and whether it has real cider.

To get the information on every pub nationally that qualified along with all the country's breweries, get yourself a copy of The Guide at shop1.camra.org.uk

Dean Barrett

Hertfordshire Area Organiser



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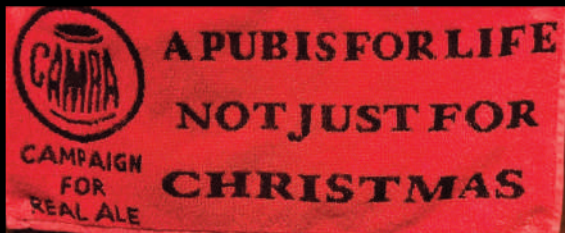
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Herts Pubs, Clubs & Breweries

AK Acknowledged with 2023 Silver Award

McMullen's AK Original Mild has won Silver in the Mild category of this year's East Anglian round of CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain competition. AK, a light mild, was in strong company. Over thirty breweries in the six counties of East Anglia brew a mild but light mild is a rarity. In the competition, AK was only outpaced by the Gold winner, Mighty Oak's dark Oscar Wilde from Maldon. Mr Winter's, a Norwich brewery, took bronze with their dark Fusioneer.

AK first won CAMRA awards back in the 1970's, during the dark initial days of the real ale revival, when the beer was often a saviour in Hertfordshire, when cask ale choices were so few. Presenting the award at the Hertford brewery, Les Middlewood, CAMRA's Mac's Brewery Liaison Officer, said *"It's great to see that AK is competing so well with more recent varieties of mild from all across the region."* Fergus McMullen, Mac's Production and Sales Director, said *"This is fantastic news, especially for our brewing team of Head Brewer Chris Evans and Assistant Brewer Eva Butters who are consistently brewing AK to such a high standard - brilliant and 'always alike'. And, that a traditional cask ale, around for 190 years, can still be recognised with this excellent modern*

Silver award." Chris added *"It's such a positive award for our cask ale range."*

Les Middlewood
McMullen's
Brewery Liaison
Officer (BLO)
South Herts
CAMRA



(L-R): Eva, Les, Chris and Fergus with the Silver award.



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New Beer from New River

Unit 47, Hoddesdon Industrial Centre EN11 0FF



If you enjoyed New River brewery's "Happy and Glorious" celebration beer at the time of the King's Coronation earlier this year, you were not the only one, because the 4.2% ABV classic English bitter was soon crowned as a regal success. Feedback to the brewery was

extremely encouraging and it soon spurred on an idea that John Bourdeaux, owner at New River, had been contemplating for some time – that perhaps there was a gap in the range of beers that the brewery was offering. After a period of consideration, John and his head brewer, Sammy Dennis, brewed another batch, renamed as "Chadwell", which launched in August.

All casks were quickly consumed by thirsty drinkers, leading to a decision that the beer is to be added to the company's permanent range. John said: *"I just have a feeling that many people are beginning to discover or rediscover traditional brown British bitter beers. When we sent out the first batch of*

Chadwell in August – around fifty casks – it was consumed within a fortnight. Could these types of beer be coming back into fashion? We have decided to add Chadwell to our permanent range of beers and further batches are on the way". Describing the beer, John continued: *"The recipe combines six different British malts to yield a full-bodied, malty flavour with nice hints of sweetness. A modest late addition of Fuggles hops rounds off the brew".*

Many of the brewery's beer titles take reference from features on the New River, a man-made course first constructed in 1613 to take fresh water to London. Chadwell is a spring, one of two original sources of the New River, which is found on the King's Meads between Ware and Hertford. The brewery, established in 2015, is less than a stone's throw from the river, further south in Pindar Road, Hoddesdon.

New River beers have become a very welcome option in many a Hertfordshire pub. When you find it, give Chadwell a try!

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA

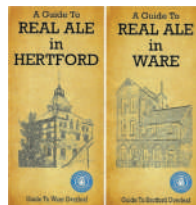
A New Guide to... Real Ale in Hertford & Ware

Look out for CAMRA's new, *free*, fold-out leaflet listing over fifty Real Ale (cask ale) outlets in the two towns and neighbouring villages – launched in September. Each pub has been given a supply of the guides for customers and it can also be found in local libraries, museums and Tourist Offices – and, of course, at CAMRA South Hertfordshire Branch events.

"Pubs Need Us – We Need Pubs"

Pubs are continuing to have a difficult time in the current economic conditions and cask ale sales have seen a dip. Many pubs need a greater footfall – we hope the guide will be a help in achieving this. 'Tis time to rediscover the pleasure of a pint of cask ale and a chat in a local hostelry. With over fifty pubs to choose from there are bound to be a few in tune with you.

The Guide includes a brief introduction to each town, details of transport links, town and district maps, brief descriptions of each outlet, current opening hours and the variety of cask ale to be found. There are short paragraphs on CAMRA, Real Ale, Local Branches, Pints of View and WhatPub – CAMRA's listing of all cask ale-selling pubs in the country.



Also find the guide online at southherts.camra.org.uk/campaigning/local-pub-guides/

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA

End of an Era at the Old Cross Tavern

8 St Andrew Street, Hertford SG14 1JA

The Old Cross Tavern in St. Andrew Street, Hertford has been sold but is set to continue unaltered as one of South Herts’ foremost real ale pubs. Owners Nigel “Bev” Beviss and Mary Gianoli have retired to enjoy time in the countryside of North East Essex and Suffolk but can be proud of their achievements at the ‘Old Cross’ – a pub which has found a warm and welcome place in the town since its opening in 1999 when it was brilliantly converted from a former shop – in 2022 gaining an entry in the book “East of England – Pub Interiors of Special Historic Interest”. The pub’s many achievements have included being multi-gold award winners in CAMRA’s South Hertfordshire Pub of the Year competition and being an ever-present in the Good Beer Guide since 2001. The Old Cross Tavern has always stayed loyal to its founding principles and its slogan “Pubs The Way They Used To Be”, where a fine pint and hearty conversation are always to the fore. It has become a Hertford cask ale magnet luring local real ale drinkers and those from far and wide. We wish Mary and Bev all the best for their future and thank them for their steadfast dedication to cask ale confirmed by the amazing range of top-condition ales that have featured on the handpumps over the years.

On Sunday 5 November the pub was packed with regulars and well-wishers, including South Herts CAMRA members, as the beers flowed through the afternoon and deep into the evening. Bev was unable to attend but Mary (pictured above) took centre stage in an emotional farewell and was presented with flowers and a wonderful hand-made album of photographs marking the years. Mary was keen to give heartfelt thanks to all of the pub’s current and past staff and to all of the customers and groups that have supported the pub saying “It’s all of these people that have made, and continue to make, the Old Cross Tavern what it is”.

The building has been purchased by local business partners Will Huggins and David Pratt, the pub to be run by James Ashbourne, well-known in the area for his spells at the former



Retiring owner - Mary Gianoli

Crafty Duck and Duncombe Arms in Hertford and the Punch House in Ware. Few changes are anticipated and the commitment to quality real ale remains paramount and intact. The Old Cross Tavern sets off into a new era...

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA

Pints of View 307 Crossword Solution

P	O	R	T	E	R	H	O	U	S	E	H	I		
I		H		X		A	N	R	A	I	M	E	D	
C	L	I	P	P	E	R	I	N	N	L	P		R	
K	N		R		D		O		I	R	O	N	A	G
L	O	O	S	E	C	H	A	N	G	E			L	S
E		C		S		A				W	A	T	N	E
D	E	E	P	S	E	T		P	H	I	O			A
	R			T				E	S	I	P		M	U
I		O	A	R		S	E	N	S	E		O	H	O
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		C				H		W	E	T	H	E	R	S

The Sopwell Sweep Ale Trail



Friday 29th December

2.00pm	Beehive
2.45pm	White Hart Tap
3.30pm	Garlbaldi
4.15pm	White Lion
5.00pm	Goat
5.45pm	Hare & Hounds

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Herts CAMRA Festivals

26th St. Albans Beers & Cider Festival Report

For the final four days in September, thousands of discerning drinkers flocked to the Alban Arena for Hertfordshire's biggest celebration of beer and cider. While much would have been familiar to long-term festival fans making a return visit, there were some big changes too - not least the most significant revision of the bar layout in the event's history.

For the first time, the main bar - showcasing the best of cask ale from across the UK - was situated on the stage, clearing its previous location on the floor of the auditorium for a new-style Hertfordshire bar and an expanded selection of cider & perry.

A mixture of new and returning breweries hosted their own showcase bars too - **Tring**, **Mad Squirrel**, **Vale** and **Ossett** making their return, with **Crossover Blendery** joining us for the first time with their unique and celebrated spontaneously fermented ales.

Extended ranges were also on offer from other brewery sponsors, including **New River**, **Oakham**, **Woodforde's**, **Harvey's** and **McMullen's**. Our souvenir glasses (including, by popular demand, a half pint tankard option) featured a logo celebrating the role of the old St. Albans Prison in the popular 1970s TV sitcom *Porridge*.

Also returning was a 20 page full-colour programme / beer list, the back page of which featured a walk between the **nine St. Albans Pubs** and **one St. Albans Club** that fought off strong competition to make it into the **Good Beer Guide 2024**.

The food offering received a shake-up for 2023 too. While Crusty Pie Company, Kell's Kitchen, and No2 Pound Street delicatessen made their return, rumbling tummies were also served by Seawise in their vintage fish and chips van, the team from the **Portland Arms** serving Yorkshire Pudding wraps, and Kotinos with a range of olives, nuts and other Mediterranean snacks.

For those wanting an expert guide through their food and drink, we welcomed beer expert



Des De Moor and cheese expert **James Grant** who teamed up to offer a fantastic beer, cider and cheese pairing session. And long-time friend of the festival, beer writer **Roger Protz** also laid on a tutored tasting session with a journey around a selection of ale styles.

As if that wasn't enough, we also enlisted pub heritage guru **Paul Ainsworth** to lead a walk around some of the city's most historic hostelrys.



St. Albans Festival - Friendly & Fun



A big change for this year was the music offering - the biggest line-up in the festival's history, with six live acts performing. Solo artist **George Croucher** got things started on Thursday evening, followed by covers band **Cherry**. Then on Saturday we had four

bands providing an eclectic range of music throughout the day: **SHELC, Sweetcornbread, Folding Stars** and **Number 7 Band**. In between the music, auctioneer extraordinaire Steve Bury made his return to the festival following an absence last year to sell off some more of our breweriana collection.

The festival was organised by a new team this year, with longstanding volunteer John Tubridy stepping up to lead things for the first time. He was assisted by Tom Blakemore, Geoff Govier, Emily Ryans, Dave Wright and Ben Wilkinson. Also playing a key role in the team in the run-up to the festival was John Lightfoot who battled through illness to continue his important contribution as festival treasurer. Devastatingly, John lost his fight with leukaemia and passed away just as the festival he had so hoped to be well enough to attend got under way. You can read a full obituary of our dear and much-missed friend on page 4.

It's a fitting tribute to John that the festival was a success, meaning we can look forward to returning next year. The dates for your diary are **Wed 25th to Sat 28th September 2024**.

But to make that possible, we do need your help in a couple of ways:

VOLUNTEERS - more than anything else the festival is reliant on volunteers and, as people get older and some move away, we need to recruit new ones every year. There is a great variety of different roles available, and we'd love to discuss which could suit you. Want to be part of the festival family? Drop an email to organiser@stalbansbf.org.uk

SPONSORS - we're enormously grateful to this year's sponsors but we need more. Financial and in-kind support is essential to the viability of the festival, and there are a range of advertising and sponsorship packages available to suit all budgets. Could your business use our festival as a platform for promotion? If so, please get in touch at sponsorship@stalbansbf.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you and, until next year, CHEERS!

Ben Wilkinson
Publicity Manager
St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival

Vale Trip - ‘thank you’ to Festival Volunteers

The ultimate heroes of this year’s highly successful 26th St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival were the hard-working volunteers, 42 of whom enjoyed a cracking day out at the Vale Brewery, near Aylesbury.

Hosted by the affable Joe Brouder, Managing Director and ably supported by brother Jimmy, Operations Director and Dave Renton, Head Brewer, the festival workers were invited to a generous ‘tasting’ of a dozen beers from Vale’s full range, all served in top notch condition. The only headache was deciding which one to sample next!

Apart from quaffing ales in a wonderful setting, an action-packed afternoon included a tour of their brewery, where Joe and





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Dave gave a candid but humorous view of their take on running a successful brewery in these somewhat challenging times.

Worth a mention are Farm House Slice who were busy serving super fresh and tasty pizzas from a converted horsebox, and the live music provided by Framus Cole Band, playing an eclectic selection of Blues & Jazz tunes which added to the good vibes of the day.

Finally, what absolutely demonstrated the great ambiance was when Joe and Jimmy were joined behind the bar by Beer Festival volunteers Geoff Govier (Technical Manager) and Julian Griffiths (Bar Tender) much to the amusement of everyone.

What a great day!

Dave Wright

Staffing Manager

St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival



Volunteers Meet Brewer at Robin Hood

After a fantastic day visiting Vale brewery in Buckinghamshire, around 40 volunteers tumbled off the coach straight into the Harvey's Tap Takeover at the Robin Hood in St. Albans.

Having previously impressed Harvey's with his perfectly kept ales, landlord Jim Pratt had managed to organise a special Meet the Brewer event with Miles Jenner, Managing Director and Head Brewer.

Attendees were treated to a wide range of Harvey's beers rarely if ever to be found in St. Albans, alongside Robin Hood stalwart Sussex Best. These included Old Ale, Armada Ale, and the truly excellent Bonfire Boy (a smoky strong ale). Their ever-popular Dark Mild - which won Gold in the Mild category at this year's Champion Beer of Britain - had already sold-out by 7pm on Friday!

Miles Jenner spoke to a packed-out audience about the brewery's history, its culture, and its future direction - it was founded in 1790 and remains a family business committed to sourcing locally grown produce.

CAMRA greatly appreciates Harvey's commitment to brewing the highest quality real ales.

Emily Ryans

Sponsorship Manager

St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival



Meet the (Harvey's) Brewer Miles Jenner, standing centre back, being clapped and cheered in the Robin Hood

Septemberfest in St. Albans?

Those of you who visited the St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival this year may have met Peter Gross greeting visitors and selling tokens & glasses at the main entrance. Peter, from Dillingen in the Saarland (a region of Germany just south of Luxembourg), has been coming over to work at the Festival since 2018 and is now a well known face amongst Festival goers!

His regular visits have generated a lot of curiosity amongst his friends in the Saarland and, after initially thinking he was mad to travel to St. Albans to volunteer at a festival selling strange British beers, a group of 7 then decided to pay the Festival a visit this year. In addition, they decided to treat the Festival organisers, and some local friends, to a traditional German after-festival dinner – bringing 14kg of pork and plenty of Sauerkraut with them.

Their programme involved a pub and history tour of St. Albans, followed by a warm welcome to the Festival by John Tubridy (Festival Organiser) and a chance to sample some of the wide selection of excellent British beers, ciders and perries. They were delighted by the variety of beer styles available at the Festival compared to the range in their region of Germany and, after a first evening of experimentation, returned the following evening to indulge more of their favourite styles.

The Lower Red Lion in Fishpool Street, provided the location and kitchens, for Andy and Thomas to prepare their German dinner. Unsurprisingly, it was extremely popular with the 30 or so invited guests.

Our German friends had a wonderful time in St. Albans and were delighted by



(L-R): Thomas, Kerstin, Pepp, Anja, Andy, Margaret, Peter, Rita

the welcome they received from local festival goers. I'm sure that they'll be back again - hopefully next year!

Will Lewis

Official Photographer

St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival

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Old Festival attracts Young Blood!

As a regular attendee and volunteer at the St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival, I can attest that it's more than just an event – it's a cherished tradition!

Having got married last year and seen some old school friends for the first time in ages, I thought it would be great to meet up again, and decided there could be no better way than to invite them to the festival – especially as some had never before experienced its delights.

For those new to the St. Albans Beer Festival, the atmosphere is nothing short of electric. The camaraderie among festival-goers, the diverse selection of ales, ciders, perries (and more!) alongside incredible food options, create an experience that's hard to replicate elsewhere. As my friends quickly discovered, this festival is not to be missed.

What struck me most was their enthusiasm to return next year. The festival's blend of entertainment, friendly faces, and of course beverages, left an indelible mark on them. It's heartening to know that the tradition is poised to continue with new additions to our group.

To anyone considering attending the St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival or, even better, volunteering, I wholeheartedly encourage you to do so. The festival's warm embrace is a testament to the inclusive spirit of the beer community, and I believe that people can find, not only enjoyment, but also a sense of belonging. So, come join us next year, raise a glass, and be part of a tradition that's worth sharing. Cheers!



Jonathan (2nd from right) with young friends... and dad!

Photo credit: Will Lewis

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Jonathan Joyke

South Herts CAMRA

27th Watford Beer Festival Report

Our festival took place in July at Halsey Masonic Hall, Watford, where 40 real ales, many from local breweries, along with cider and perry, were served. Whilst the festival has always been able to stock beers from Hertfordshire, for much of the festival's history there were no breweries in the Watford & District branch area. Happily, that has changed in recent years as the increase in microbreweries nationally has resulted in a few popping up nearby. At this year's beer festival, we had ales from **Bowtie Brewers** in Watford, **Oxhey Village Brewery** and **Paradigm Brewery**, Sarratt.

Rob Atkinson and Neil Hodges set up Paradigm at Green End Farm, Sarratt in 2015 and almost straight away produced a lovely strong winter ale called Watford Winter Warmer especially for the 2015 Watford Beer Festival. The beer has been astoundingly successful at the festival over the years, winning Beer of the Festival every year since 2015 except for 2017 when it was runner-up. Eventually Paradigm decided more people needed to try it, so they marketed it more widely as Black Friday; however, it would always turn up as Watford Winter Warmer at our festival.

Almost inevitably, Watford Winter Warmer won Beer of the Festival again in 2023, yet this was a bitter-sweet victory since the branch had recently found out that Paradigm Brewery would cease trading. In fact, by the time we'd put the cask up on the stillage, the brewery had already produced its last beer. It's very likely that the Watford Winter Warmer we had at the beer festival was the very last one in existence, but at least it went out on a high. It also leaves room at the top for a new winner next year.

In the year that Watford Winter Warmer was runner-up, the Beer of the Festival, Club Hammer Stout, was the product of **Pope's Yard**; another local brewery. Pope's Yard didn't have any cask beer at this year's festival, but they're still very much with us. Brewing is on hold as they set up equipment in their new brewery in North Watford, which marks a welcome return to the branch area after spending several years brewing at the Frogmore Paper Mill in Apsley. Their most recent venture is a collaborative brew with **Creative Juices Brewing Company** in Maple Cross. Called



Ready for Love, it was brewed for Watford Pride and was available most recently at the St. Albans Beer and Cider Festival.

Ready for Love was a unique foray into cask beer production by Creative Juices, who normally produce for kegs and cans. In fact, several of the new breweries that have appeared in recent years in the Watford & District area have been producing little or no cask beer, which makes the loss of Paradigm even more keenly felt, since they concentrated mostly on cask and supplied several pubs in the area.

Bowtie Brewers in Watford is the nearest real ale producer to the festival venue. Happily, brewer Peter Hodge was able to supply a cask of Coronation Ale. The 6.2% beer was originally brewed for the coronation of King Charles III and was inspired by Victorian milds, which were obviously a bit stronger than most of today's milds. The beer went down well with customers, who voted it into 3rd place in the beer of the festival competition.

Oxhey Village Brewery also scored a top 10 beer with their Summer ale. Like Bowtie, they are a small operation who started off by producing bottles and kegs but have supplied cask beers to the festival for the last few years, along with local pubs, such as the **Load of Hay** in Watford Heath, and **Two Trees Micro** in Watford, where their keg Imperial Stout is a favourite.

We hope the festival does a good job in promoting local brewers and real ale, but

the best place to enjoy cask beer is in a pub. Several of the beers that we had on at the beer festival are also available in local pubs. Like OVB, Pope's Yard's real ales are often seen at Two Trees Micro (including the recent Ready for Love collab) and Paradigm beers were also a regular feature there. The excellent **New River Brewery** of Hoddesdon have also had beer on at Two Trees Micro. **XT** and **Animal Brewery** aren't too far away in Bucks, and you can often see their beers in **the Land of Liberty, Peace, and Plenty** in Heronsgate, as well as beers from **Tring Brewery**, which is a very familiar name in the area. Tring's Sidepocket for a Toad is widely available, but try the **Wellington Arms** in Watford or the **Railway Arms** and **Villiers Arms** in Oxhey Village for other beers from the Tring range. Beers from **Vale Brewery** in Aylesbury can also commonly be found in pubs around the area, with the **Regent Club** in North Watford and the **Sportsman** in Croxley Green being frequent outlets. **Harvey's** Sussex Best is an excellent ale, but it could never be called local. However, it now seems to be available regularly at the **White Lion** in Watford.

So quite a few of the breweries at the festival have beers available in pubs and clubs around the area - why not get out there and see what you can find?

Here's the list of the top ten beers, as voted for by our customers:

1. Paradigm - Watford Winter Warmer
2. Five Points - Railway Porter
3. Bowtie - Coronation Ale
4. Paradigm Cassiobury Sunshine
5. Paradigm - Hitchhiker's Guide
6. OVB - Summer
7. Leighton Buzzard - Train Robber
8. Vale - Orca
9. = Harvey's - Sussex Best
- = New River - Blind Poet

We hope all our visitors enjoyed the festival and look forward to the next one!

Andrew Vaughan
Watford & District CAMRA

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Brewery Visits & Tours

Crossover Blendery

Lannock Manor Farm, Hitchin Road, Weston SG4 7EE

The Crossover Blendery took St. Albans Beer Festival by storm in September when its Damascene fruit beer walked away with the Champion Beer of Herts award. *[Ed: ...which will be presented on 9 December at the brewery's Christmas Market - see below - all are welcome!]*. At a time when the world of cask beer is dominated by IPAs and porters, here was something completely different – a Belgian-style lambic beer, aged in wood and with a decidedly acidic aroma and flavour.

Crossover, based on a farm close to Weston and Baldock, was launched in 2020 by George Stagg and Charlie Wood. They are not brewers – they worked in the City of London – but they were beer lovers who had an epiphany when visiting one of Belgium’s famous lambic brewers; Cantillon in Anderlecht.

“We wanted to do that,” George says. He means making beer by spontaneous fermentation, allowing wild yeasts in the atmosphere and in wooden vessels to produce alcohol.

George and Charlie buy unfinished beer from Elgood’s Brewery in Wisbech and then age it in oak casks bought from the French wine industry, together with some whisky and mead casks.

Elgood’s has two shallow vessels known as coolships where hopped wort – the sugary extract made from barley malt (and wheat, in this instance) that has been boiled with hops – is attacked by wild yeasts. Yeast and bacteria in the wood continue the fermentation at Crossover.

George and Charlie use only British fruit in their beers, including apricots, peaches, plums, cherries and raspberries. Damascene (6.5%) has an addition of damsons from Worcestershire and is a blend of one, two and three year old beers that will continue to age in the bottle.

Next March, the Crossover taproom will re-open at weekends and, in the meantime, there will be a Christmas Market on Saturday 9



December. Beers can be bought from the onsite shop or online: www.crossoverblendery.co.uk and are also available from the Beer Shop, London Road, St. Albans.

Roger Protz
South Herts CAMRA

Pints of View 307 Sudoku Solution

Y	G	L	S	I	E	H	T	K
H	E	S	L	K	T	I	Y	G
K	I	T	G	H	Y	L	S	E
T	H	I	Y	G	K	S	E	L
S	K	Y	E	L	I	G	H	T
G	L	E	H	T	S	K	I	Y
E	Y	K	I	S	L	T	G	H
I	T	H	K	E	G	Y	L	S
L	S	G	T	Y	H	E	K	I

3 Brewers Music (& Beer) Festival

The Potato Shed, Symondshyde Farm, Nr Hatfield AL10 9BB

Starting life in 2016 as a brewery open day, the 3 Brewers Music Festival has grown over the years to become something much bigger.

This year was the busiest yet, with attendance up around forty percent on 2022, helped by the warm, sunny weather.

The full range of 3 Brewers cask beers was available at the main Tap Room bar along with KeyKeg beers, real cider, prosecco, gin and soft drinks. Outdoors, the real ale bar proved particularly popular and sold out in record time.

2023 saw more food options than ever, with a hog roast from David at the Lower Red Lion, pizza from Any Street Kitchen, noodles and bao buns from Umai Noodles and something sweet from the Choc Spot.

Live music came from a wide variety of acts across two stages. MacLaren Wall and Paul Blakeway-Ely played acoustic sets on the second stage, while the main stage hosted



cool jazz from Ictus, the heavy blues rock of Kaspar & The Swamp Dogs and, ending the night, a high octane set of rock & pop covers from headline act The Lettuceheads.

The atmosphere was fantastic throughout the day and the famous firepit roared into life once the sun went down. For 2024 there's a plan to increase bar capacity to reduce queues, so next year promises to be even better!

Steve Thompson

*3 Brewers Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO)
South Herts CAMRA*

The Orange Tree Norton Road, Baldock



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Best ever Beer at ‘Spoons!

Hi there

I thought you might like to know that a beer I discovered at your recent Real-Ale Festival was one of the **BEST CASK ALES I HAVE EVER HAD THE PLEASURE OF DRINKING!**

In fact I enjoyed it so much, that I ended up visiting my local on four occasions over three days.

The beer that's blown me away is Mitch Steele's **New Realm Hoptropolis IPA 6%** brewed at Hook Norton; and I've since discovered that it won **Champion Beer** of the festival.

If you can provide me with more information about your festivals and beers, it should make for a great story!

Cheers!

Hello Paul

I certainly agree with you on Hoptropolis: absolutely loved it! A great beer, which is not a surprise as Mitch Steele was responsible for it.

Regarding Wetherspoon Real-Ale Festivals, here is an idea of how they work. Firstly, we draw up a list of potential brewers and ask them to propose interesting beers. Our selection will include a good range of strengths, colours and styles. We usually feature a number of new or bespoke beers and may also feature beers that have proved very popular in previous festivals.

Another company helps us source international brewers; usually those with a great reputation, such as Mitch Steele. Acting as hosts are a small number of UK brewers, large enough to produce the quantity of beer required and, most importantly, able to accommodate the requirements of the visiting brewer to assure the beer's integrity.

There is no set system for allocating brewers, though if a visiting brewer has a preference, we will always try to arrange this. For brewers

who are making return visits, like Mitch, we try to make it interesting by pairing them with breweries they have not been to before.

As well as providing interesting beers for JDW customers, the international brewers system provides a great opportunity for brewers to work together and gain knowledge from each other. Over the years, many visiting brewers have gained experience in brewing cask ales that they take back abroad. Furthermore, the UK host brewers often tell us how useful they find the experience.

We begin working on a festival approximately five months before it starts, which allows us plenty of time to compile the beer list; we certainly do not want to rush it! Brewers also require sufficient notice to ensure they can schedule production and obtain the ingredients. The logistical planning to ensure that everything comes together with pubs getting the beers when needed, also takes a while.

The JDW festival beers enter a competition, held at the Trent Bridge Inn, Nottingham and this time was the 10th anniversary. The judges include brewers, JDW staff, local CAMRA members and pub customers. Beers are divided into classes and go through two rounds to decide class winners, followed by a final round to crown the overall champion.

Winners will often reappear in a future festival, but it may not be for some time due to our focus on continually finding new beers. However, we certainly hope Mitch will return to brew his beer again in the near future.

I hope this covers all you need to know, but please feel free to contact me again if you have any queries. We are always happy to provide information on the JDW guest ales and festivals.

Regards

David Aucutt
East West Ales Limited

'Spoons Supports Suppliers

Hi there

I came across this on a forum:

Small brewery: Hey, would you like to buy some of our beer to sell in your pubs? It's really good.

Stonegate: No.

Greene King: No.

Marston's: No.

Punch: No.

Wetherspoon: Sure, we'll take a hundred pallets.

Small brewery: Great!

Wetherspoon: We'll pay £X a barrel.

Small brewery: Um, we only just cover our costs at that price, but a hundred pallets is a lot of beer so you've got a deal.

Wetherspoon: Do you get Small Brewers' Relief?

Small brewery: Um, yes?

Wetherspoon: We'll deduct the amount of that from what we pay you.

Small brewery: What??!!

Wetherspoon: When can you deliver?

Small brewery: ...

Later in the week:

Bank manager: How's it going lads?

Small brewery: Well, we just did a big deal with Wetherspoons.

Bank manager: Oh, you've hit the big time at last, will you make a lot of money?

Small brewery: Well, no, but we're losing less money than if we hadn't done the deal.

Would you care to comment?

Cheers!

Paul, here you go

Wetherspoon has been a supporter of small independent breweries since it was founded in 1979. As a free house, we were able to

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Full rate card on page 46

operate outside the beer-tie restrictions which limited customer choice in many pubs. This has allowed us for many years to offer a wide range of beers from all over the country, to customers irrespective of their location.

The breweries we work with benefit from the exposure their beers get in our pubs, both locally and nationally, and we have worked with many of them for a long time.

We are currently supplied with beer from over 300 breweries.

We try to offer great value to customers, which, in part, comes from negotiating a competitive price with all suppliers, but this is balanced against the need to build a long-term relationship, which we try to do.

Eddie Gershon

Travelwatch

Pub-by-Bus

At the Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister announced that the Manchester arm of HS2 would be abandoned and the money saved reallocated to other transport projects. One of these was the extension of the £2 maximum bus fare until 31st December 2024.

Fare Cap – max £2 per journey

All Hertfordshire bus operators signed up EXCEPT Red Rose Travel and Sullivan Buses. On TfL buses the single bus fare is only £1.75 anyway. This gives scope for pub goers to explore further afield at nominal extra expense. In fact some incredibly long journeys can be achieved for £2, such as Harlow to Heathrow on the 724 or Rickmansworth to Stevenage on the new 725.
<https://www.intalink.org.uk/%C2%A32farecap>

SaverCard – up to 50% fare reduction

Another money saver, funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is an increased range of annual Hertfordshire SaverCards, costing £20 for online applications:

Senior SaverCard (60+ year olds) – 50% discount
 SaverCard Plus (26-59 year olds) – 15% discount
 SaverCard Plus (20-25 year olds) – 50% discount
 SaverCard (11-19 year olds) – 50% discount

The card must be scanned on ticket machines or shown to the driver.

SaverCard is accepted on all buses in Hertfordshire EXCEPT Grant Palmer and TfL buses. It gives best value on Red Rose and Sullivan Buses as neither operator has signed up to the £2 Fare Cap.
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/savercard

Intalink Explorer Ticket – unlimited travel

Although use is now more limited, the one day Explorer ticket has dropped from £9 to £7.60:

Adult – £7.60 for one day
 Adult (with SaverCard) – £6.50 for one day
 Senior (with Senior SaverCard) – £3.80 for one day
 Young Person (with SaverCard – £3.80 for one day

Weekly and four-weekly bus passes are also available.

The Intalink Explorer ticket is valid on all bus services that run wholly within Hertfordshire and services that run between Hertfordshire and neighbouring counties, EXCEPT 508/9/10 (Arriva), 31 (A2B Travel), 1/1A (Carousel), 26 (Centrebus), 74 (Grant Palmer), 724 (Green Line), 167 (Star Travel), 951 (Sullivan Buses) and 50 (Vale Travel) where certain exceptions and restrictions apply.

<https://www.intalink.org.uk/explorer>

BSUnet – unlimited urban area travel

Also funded by the BSIP is a reduced price Hertfordshire town-centred ticket operating within zones. For example, St. Albans has two zones prices as below:

Adult – £5.50 / £4.30 for one day
 Adult (with SaverCard) – £4.70 / £3.70 for one day
 Senior (with Senior SaverCard) – £2.80 / £2.20 for one day
 Young Person (with SaverCard – £2.80 / £2.20 for one day

Weekly and four-weekly bus passes are also available and a bundle of 10 day tickets.

<https://www.intalink.org.uk/busnet-tickets>

PlusBus – unlimited urban area travel

For those visiting by train from further afield, the PlusBus add-on is available for travel from many local stations. Daily price IN ADDITION TO train ticket is typically £3.00 Adult or £1.95 with Railcard.

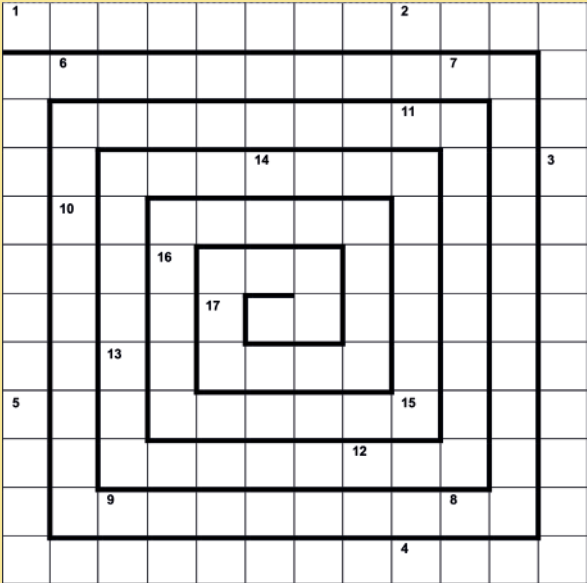
www.plusbus.info

As can be seen, to make the most of the available discounted schemes requires planning, which is very difficult without a smartphone or laptop computer. If you have been involved with a successful pub-by-bus crawl, do write in and let readers know about it. The more we use public transport, the more likely it will continue.

John Crowhurst
 South Herts CAMRA

Pints of View 308 Winter 2023

Brewery Names Christmas Catherine Wheel Competition



Entries by Fri 19 Jan 2024 to:

PoV Competition,
5 Manor Way,
Potters Bar,
Herts. EN6 1EL

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

There are **seventeen breweries** in the Catherine Wheel above and all are listed in the 2023 CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

Fill in the answers from the clues which are **ANAGRAMS** of brewery names. The last letter of each answer is also the first letter of the next.

First TWO correct entries drawn, each win:

2024 CAMRA Good Beer Guide

PINTS OF VIEW 307 COMPETITIONS

Congratulations to our four winners!

Sudoku (see page 32 for solution)

Sophie Maughan, Harpenden, Herts.
Kevin Osgood, London Colney, Herts.

Crossword (see page 22 for solution)

John Markwell, Hertford, Herts.
Mark Nichols, Rugby, Warks.

Clues:

1. BABY ED ALE in S Yorks
2. OLD EGO'S in Cambs
3. SKULLS SIMMER in Devon
4. NORTH RATS CAR in Arinackaig
5. BREWED GIN in W Midlands
6. LEAVE LEXY in Devon
7. MANY LORD LANE in Devon
8. WING DOOR in Hampshire
9. CAT TO DRY in Cambs
10. IT'S KEW TOAD in Warrington
11. THE KILT'S MET in Wilts
12. SHOCK BAG in Surrey
13. SEEK TONY in Wilts
14. NEVER RIDE in Cumbria
15. RON IS SNOB in Stockport
16. MEND SHAPE HERE in Kent
17. GIN ALE in W London

Reader's Wrong

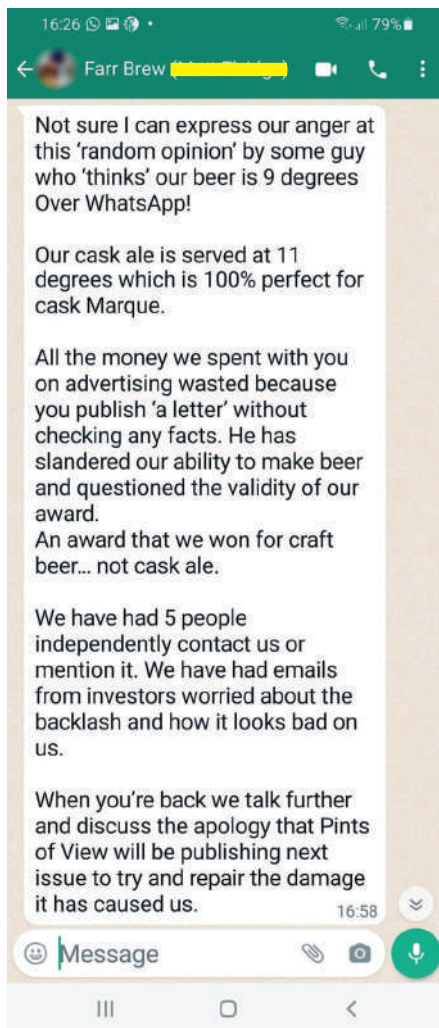
Too Chilled by Far?

In issue 307 editor Dean included three letters in *Readers Write*; one of which was from Sam Hall concerning the Elephant & Castle, Wheathampstead.

Sam referred to the pub being named “UK’s Best Rural Craft Beer Pub” and wrote that it is delightful, with a traditional “pub” feel to the bar, the staff are efficient & courteous, the food is good and the range of beers adequate. However, according to Sam, the one drawback is that the cask-conditioned beer is too cold. He suspected it was being served at nearer 9 or 10 C than the ‘perfect’ 12 to 14 C and concluded that an independent brewer should have known better!

When I first read the letter, my initial reaction was: *“Be careful what you wish for!”*. 14 C may be perfect for the traditional ‘socks & sandals’ CAMRA member, but it’s too warm for me. Furthermore, on a hot summer day, it won’t remain 14 C for long. In any case, if a beer is served *slightly* too cold, don’t complain, just... be patient.

Whilst I anticipated that Sam’s letter might prompt one or two readers to write, I did not expect to receive the indignant WhatsApp message, which is reproduced here in full.



Quite a reaction!

The first part of Sam’s letter was unambiguous praise for the Elephant & Castle: A ‘traditional “pub” feel’, ‘efficient and courteous staff’, ‘good food’ and an ‘adequate range of beers’. I’m sure that many a pub has tried long and hard, but failed, to achieve all these.

As for the one criticism - beer temperature - well, the pub could chill the beer less, save on energy-costs and reduce prices. I bet Sam would like that! Then again, maybe better to leave be. Quite possibly, Sam is in the minority...

The real point is not whether beer at the Elephant & Castle is or is not served at the ‘correct’ temperature. The real point is that, whatever Sam’s opinion, it is for the editor to decide if the letter should be published. As is stated on page 46: *“Views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by the editor or CAMRA.”*

Paul Donatantonio
Editor

Readers Write

Too Expensive by Half

Can someone please enlighten me? When I buy a pint of ale it costs £4.60 for example, but if I buy a half of the same ale it then costs me £2.50 which equates to £5 a pint = 40p surcharge!

If I buy fuel at a garage, it costs me £1.52 a litre, but if I only get half a litre it will still only cost me 76p a litre, so they do not charge extra for buying less.

Why is it then that in pubs they have a price list up for a pint but if I only get a half they charge me more? Is it because of the glass washing surcharge or a hidden surcharge to make me only drink pints, or a form of punishment for buying less?

I visit beer festivals on a regular basis too and I cannot think for the life of me why we have a surcharge added if we have a half - if I buy two halves of the same beer it should be the same price as a pint, but it doesn't work that way because I've tried it!

Men often drink pints; ladies more often drink halves - is this a form of discrimination against ladies and those who only drink halves to watch their alcohol intake?

At festivals it is the same. We have our own glasses marked up into thirds, halves and pints so there should be no surcharge in my view. If there is then it should be rounded up to the nearest 10p as most festivals have £10 cards marked up in 20p & 10p squares.

Isn't it about time we treated ALL drinkers the same and be fairer on the pricing, especially at beer festivals?

Regards
Brian Penn

Ed says: *I suspect that many readers will agree with the sentiments of your letter, Brian. However, I would argue that the example you give of being charged the same price per litre, when buying fuel, is an unfair comparison. I don't think you should ignore the facts that you have to serve yourself and provide your own packaging.*

I am probably one of a minority who believes it wrong to expect a half pint in a pub to be half the price of a pint. Why? It takes a similar time to serve and take payment, a similar time to clear the glass from the table, a similar time to wash and dry the glass. Put another way, the cost of serving two half pints is most certainly greater than serving one pint.

By my reckoning, pubs charging an extra 5% for halves is entirely acceptable, in which case the £4.60 pint you refer to would be charged at a not unreasonable £2.45 for a half (rounding up to the nearest 5p).

With regard to beer festivals, where glasses

are generally refilled rather than replaced, did you visit our recent St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival? You would have been very pleased to find that a half pint was exactly half the price of a pint and, as you suggest, a third was rounded up to the nearest 10p, due to the 10p increments on the 'token-cards'.

My understanding is that, if a CAMRA festival, then thirds and halves must not be charged extra, unless for the necessity of price rounding.

To finish, you make one excellent point with which I couldn't agree more; namely, that when extra is being charged for a half pint, it must be shown on a clearly displayed price list.



£4.60



£?..??

How much?!

Following your article on Mild Ale in the Spring Edition, you will see from the attached copy of a 1960 Ind Coope bar pricelist that milds were then available for 1/- a pint – makes you think, doesn't it! *[Ed: It certainly does. That's 5p in new money – I could get blottoed for a £1!]*

When I arrived at Benskins, Watford in 1968, the Lower High Street brewery was still brewing dark mild and, so far as I can recall, continued to do so until closing in 1972. This brew was particularly popular in the Hertford and Ware area, possibly due to the proximity of another popular mild ale Brewer...

McMullen's, of course, continue to brew their mild ale.

Sam Hall

Ed says: *Thanks for that piece of nostalgia, Sam. I see that the bottle size of barley wine and spring ale was a 'nip'. I thought that sounded decidedly mean, but have just learned via the internet that one 'nip' is a third of a pint and an abbreviation of 'nipperkin'.*

IND COOPE GROUP OF COMPANIES			
BOTTLED BEERS			
ARCTIC BARLEY WINE	-	-	PER NIP 1/5½
COLNE SPRING ALE	-	-	1/11½
LIGHT ALE	-	-	10d.
JOHN BULL	-	-	1/2
BROWN ALE	-	-	10d.
ALLSOPP'S SWEET STOUT	-	-	1/1
NOURISHING STOUT	-	-	10d.
DRAUGHT BEERS			
DIAMOND - Burton Pale Ale	-	-	PER PINT 1/7
BEST BITTER	-	-	1/3
BITTER ALE	-	-	1/1
No. 3 STRONG ALE	-	-	1/6
XXX MILD ALE	-	-	1/1
XX MILD ALE (Dark)	-	-	1/-
KK MILD ALE (Light)	-	-	1/-
NATIONAL BEERS			
DOUBLE DIAMOND			
SKOL LAGER			

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**YORKSHIRE
BLONDE**
PALE SESSION ALE 3.0%

WHITE RAT
HOPPY PALE ALE 4.0%

SILVER KING
AMERICAN PALE ALE 4.3%

VOODOO
CHOCOLATE ORANGE STOUT 5.0%

EXCELSIUS
DRY-HOPPED PALE ALE 5.2%

www.ossett-brewery.co.uk

[@ossettbrewery](https://www.instagram.com/ossettbrewery)

Down Your Way

This section contains information from a large number of sources and occasionally errors may occur or the information may be out-of-date upon publication. Comments or additional information should be sent to the editor (see page 46 for contact details).

ASPENDEN: The **Fox** re-opened at the end of September. New landlords Richie and Leah offer Fuller's London Pride, Adnams Ghost Ship and Timothy Taylor Landlord and there's a new food menu for lunchtime and evening meals with roasts on Sundays – open from Tuesday to Sunday. In October a trial for Monday evening opening was operating to test demand.

ASTON: Great news! The **Rose and Crown**, closed since 2014, is due to re-open next June as a Free House. Over 80 people have contributed to the community purchase of the pub from developers. Restoration work is required before the pub can re-open. This is a story of great persistence from local people, watch out for further news in the next editions of Pints of View.

BALDOCK: The games room at the **Orange Tree** in Norton Road is back - it made way for a shop used by the community during the difficult months of the pandemic. And the bar billiards table, currently being recovered, will soon be back in place.

BAYFORD: Following the short-notice departure of previous tenants, the **Baker Arms** has remained closed with hopes that it will re-open soon. The Parish Council have expressed concern about the situation with McMullens and are looking into options that might help secure the future of the pub. Asset of Community Value status has been achieved.

BERKHAMSTED: The **Lamb** in the High Street has re-opened with two cask beers - Timothy Taylor Landlord permanently and one other changing at regular intervals.

BRAUGHING: The **Axe and Compasses** has been closed and on the market. Offers in excess of £510,000 are sought. Alternatively, a free-of-tie lease can be negotiated.

BREACHWOOD GREEN: The **Red Lion** now offers a CAMRA members discount with cask ale from £4 a pint. Remember to bring your membership card. There are three cask ales.

BROXBOURNE: Welcome to Rachel Bell, new

manager at the **White Bear** in the High Road. Currently there's no cask ale, it's said for lack of demand, but local CAMRA branch members are hoping that a cask golden beer might be tried to tempt customers.

BUSHEY HEATH: There has been a change of management at the **Three Crowns** in the High Road. Watford and District branch would like to welcome Kris and Bobbi Prowse, who have taken over from Michael and Kat Duffy.

CODICOTE: The **Globe** is closed following the departure of tenants. As we go to press McMullen's website says closed "until further notice".

COLNEY HEATH: Brilliant to report that the **Crooked Billet** is now open for business after a month's closure following a lorry crashing into it in the early hours of 31 October. Only the lorry driver suffered minor injuries but there is significant damage to the Good Beer Guide-listed pub which has re-opened minus the use of one room. A full schedule and timescale of remedial work for the 200 year-old pub is yet to be finalised but everyone at the pub is steadfastly committed to doing their very best to serve the community and its visitors during the busy Christmas period and into 2024 - the kitchen has re-opened and there are three real ales at the bar. The **Crooked Billet** is the only surviving pub in the village – please support it as much as you can during this difficult period.

ESSENDON WEST END: The **Candlestick** re-opened in the summer after a short closure with new tenant Neil Carroll at the helm. Three or more Cask ales feature at the bar.

GOSMORE: The food led **Bull** closed at the end of June, the pub then offered for freehold sale or rental with a closing date for offers of 20 October. We await further news.

GREAT AMWELL: The **George IV**, uphill from the nearby picturesque New River Path, offers a single cask ale, Adnams Ghost Ship, and a varied European-influenced menu. Closed on Monday/

Tuesdays, the pub is open lunchtimes and evenings and all day at weekends (closes 6pm on Sundays).

GREAT WYMONDLEY: As previously reported, the tenancy at the **Green Man** is available and being advertised. Latest reports are that a temporary landlord is in place with wet sales only.

HARPENDEN: The **Harpenden Arms** has re-opened after a major refurbishment – there's a new menu and a good range of Fuller's cask ales.

HATFIELD: A refurbishment by McMullens of the **Red Lion** on the Great North Road was completed in early November. Enjoy AK Original Mild, Country or Mac's guest ale – currently Boot Warmer – with a game of darts or a hearty meal.

HAULTWICK: In a recent planning application for the removal of asbestos at the **Rest and Welcome** – closed for 10 years – there is indication that the owners still wish to re-open it as a pub. Those years of closure will have no doubt taken their toll on the fabric and inside of the building so any re-opening would be many months away. Nevertheless, it would be brilliant to see the pub open again. There's hope!

HERONSGATE: McMullen's have completed improvements and refurbishment at the **Stag** which re-opened in September. Mac's cask beers have included the Rivertown Rugby World Cup seasonal special 'Nice Try'.

HERTFORD: The **Old Cross Tavern** in St. Andrew Street has been sold and remains open under new ownership and management – see article on page 22. In Port Vale, the **Two Brewers** closed for the last time in late October, having gained a planning change of use for residential use many months ago. McMullen's have completed some external redecoration works and a Gents WC upgrade at the **Great Eastern Tavern** in Railway Place. Two to three Mac's cask ales feature at the bar including the seasonal specials. New refrigeration equipment has been installed in the cellar of the **Hertford Club** to maintain good cask ale temperature – and real cider and perry is back. Welcome to Steve and Collette, new tenants at McMullen's **Lord Haig** in South Street where Mac's handpumped beers are at the bar.

HITCHIN: At the **Anchor**, in Cambridge Road, plans have been submitted to build a Sainsburys local in part of the car park. As part of the scheme, existing outbuildings

will be demolished and a new garden area created for pub customers. But there are local objections to the plan including concerns over proposed car access off of the busy A505. A planning application has been submitted to build flats on the **Club/Bar 85** site in Whinbush Road with long serving owners, Jas and Ranjit Liddier, looking to retire. The upstairs **Club 85** is a popular music venue with many famous musicians playing there over the years. The club are looking to relocate within the town. And plans have been submitted by Owain Rhys of Syched Ltd for a new **Craft Beer Tasting Room** venture at the former TSB branch in Brand Street.

ICKLEFORD: The **Cricketers** has ceased trading – the pub is currently up for sale with an asking price of £700,000.

LETCHMORE HEATH: The Peach pub company have purchased the **Three Horseshoes**.

MILL GREEN: Regeneration work in the village, next to Hatfield, including house-building by Hatfield House, includes for the refurbishment and re-opening of the **Green Man**, closed for many years. We continue to await news of the timescale for the pub re-opening.

NEWGATE STREET: The **Coach and Horses** leasehold is up for sale. Along the road the tenancy is available at the **Crown** with Punch Taverns. Both remain open.

OLD BRICKET WOOD: The forlorn-looking and long-closed **Old Fox** is the subject of a further planning application to convert for residential use – previous attempts having been unsuccessful.

OXHEY: Long-standing landlord Chris Pyrke left the **Rifle Volunteer** in Oxhey Village in June. Watford and District branch would like to welcome new managers, Cara Western and Paul Jeffrey.

POTTERS BAR: Closed for almost a decade, a planning application has been submitted on the former **Green Man** in the High Street to confirm its future use as a nursery.

RABLEY HEATH: The **Robin Hood and Little John** has been closed for many months but it is hoped that the McMullen pub will soon re-open.

ST ALBANS: The **Hare and Hounds** in Sopwell Lane has re-opened after maintenance and improvement works – welcome to incoming

leaseholder Paul Jones who will offer three real ales, aiming to make the pub a community hub hosting local groups. The **Beehive** in Keyfield Terrace re-opened in August after refurbishment work – a selection of cask ales can be found. The new owner of the **Farriers Arms** in Lower Dagnall Street is Frazer Snell – the pub continues unchanged as a community Free House with a range for 3 - 4 real ales often including Young's Bitter, Timothy Taylor Landlord and Fuller's London Pride. The **Rose and Crown** in St. Michael's remains closed, but with a fresh planning application which includes for the re-opening of the pub. However, reinstatement and improvement works will be required ahead of any opening which is likely therefore to be many months hence.

ST MARGARETS: On the banks of the River Lea, McMullen's **Jolly Fisherman** features three cask ales – AK Original Mild, Country Bitter and IPA sometimes complemented with Mac's/Rivertown seasonal ales.

SANDRIDGE: Stonegate's **Rose and Crown** has had a period of closure during the late summer and autumn but was due to re-open in December.

STANSTEAD ABBOTTS: The **Oak** in the High Street now offers up to three Fuller's cask ales – London Pride, ESB and Oliver's Island, as seen on an October visit by local members. Along the road the resurgent **Red Lion** currently offers one changing cask ale – sometimes from a Hertfordshire brewer.

STEVENAGE: No real ale at the **Poacher** in

Bedwell Crescent on a recent North Herts branch visit, but congratulations to Gerry McGrath who has recently celebrated 30 years as landlord and is said to be the longest serving publican in the town.

TROWLEY BOTTOM: Works to construct additional private accommodation at the **Rose and Crown** is underway. Lovers of the simplicity of the unique bar areas need not worry as the bars, fitted out in the 1950's and '60s, will remain unchanged. The pub is on CAMRA's list of Unique Pub Interiors.

WARE: After many months a planning submission to convert the **Albion** in Crib Street to two residential properties has been refused by East Herts District Council. The decision notice says "Insufficient evidence of marketing has been submitted to show that an assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows that the facility is no longer needed as a Public House which is a valuable community facility". However, the pub remains closed. Also still closed, hoarded and again up for sale or lease is the **Jolly Bargeman** in Cromwell Road.

WARESIDE: The future of the **White Horse** is still unclear – it remains closed.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY: We are sad to hear of the closing of **Bedtime Beers**, the (mainly) craft ale bar and cafe outside the Howard Centre which opened in 2022 – it had been a welcome addition to the pub scene in the town. Energy costs have been cited as a major factor in the closure.

Regional CAMRA Festivals

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

Pigs Ear Real Ale Festival

Tue 28 Nov – Sat 2 Dec

Round Chapel, Glenarm Road, Lower Clapton, Hackney.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

Colchester Winter Beer Festival

Wed 31 Jan – Sat 3 Feb

Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester, Essex.

TBC Elysian Winter Beer Festival

Thu 1 – Sat 3 Feb

The Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely, Cambs.

Great British Beer Festival Winter

Thu 15 – Sat 17 Feb

Burton Town Hall, King Edward Place, Burton on Trent, Staffs.

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

TBC Chappel Winter Beer Festival

Thu 29 Feb – Sat 2 Mar

East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel and Wakes Colne Station, Wakes Colne, Essex

TBC Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 14 – Sat 16 Mar

Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St,Neots, Cambs.

Herts CAMRA Diary

The listings below are colour-coded **North Herts**, **South Herts**, **Herts & Essex Borders** and **Watford & District**. However, all CAMRA members are very welcome to attend all CAMRA Branch Meetings and Social Events. Please visit the Herts Branch websites for up-to-date information. Addresses can be found on page 46.

DECEMBER

Fri 1: H&EB Branch Christmas Meal

7.30pm **Woodbine**, Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey

Sat 2: East of North Herts Branch Countryside Tour

Pick-ups from 1pm at Letchworth, Baldock, Stevenage and Hitchin stations. We will visit several pubs in and around Buntingford. Cost approx £10. Please email chair@northherts.camra.org.uk to reserve a spot. Itinerary will be published before we set off.

Tue 5: SH Branch Meeting

8pm **Robin Hood**, Victoria Street, St.Albans

Fri 8: Oxhey Social

Starting 8.30pm **Villiers Arms**, 108 Villiers Road, WD19 4AJ, then 9.15pm **Rifle Volunteer**, 36 Villiers Road, WD19 4AJ, finishing 10pm **Railway Arms**, 1 Aldenham Road, WD19 4AB

Sat 9: Hertfordshire Beer of the Year Winner Presentation

2pm Award presentation to the **Crossover Blendery** at The Taproom, The Barn, Lannock Manor, Weston - for their Damascene 6.5% brew.

Mon 11: H&EB Branch Meeting

8.30pm **Rising Sun**, High Wych

Thu 14: W&D Club Social

8.30pm **Regent Club**, 227 St. Albans Road, Watford, WD24 5BH

Fri 15: Hitchin Christmas Social

Join us for our traditional merry tour around Hitchin's real ale pubs and bars. We'll start at the **Albert** (near the station) at 7.30pm and the rest of the stops will be published beforehand on <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> and Facebook/CAMRANorthHerts

Fri 29: The Sopwell Sweep Ale Trail

2pm starting at the **Beehive**, Keyfield Terrace - an afternoon tour of the Sopwell area of St.

Albans taking in six real ale pubs. Full itinerary at <https://southherts.camra.org.uk/>

JANUARY

Mon 1: W&D Get Away from the Family Social

1pm **Nascot Arms**, 11 Stamford Road, Watford, WD17 4QS

Tue 9: GBG2025 Selection Meeting (South Herts Branch North-East Zone)

8pm the **Hertford Club**, Bull Plain, Hertford

Wed 10: GBG2025 Selection Meeting (South Herts Branch North-West Zone)

7pm **Cross Keys**, High Street, Harpenden

Wed 10: NH Branch Meeting & Social

8pm Venue TBC, please see <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> closer to the date. In case of inclement weather, the meeting will be online and the social rearranged.

Fri 12: W&D Annual 'Pre-Xmas' London Pub Crawl

Details TBC

Tue 16: W&D Branch Meeting

8pm **Oxhey Conservative Club**, Keyser Hall, Lower Paddock Road, Oxhey, WD19 4DS

Sat 20: West of North Herts Branch Countryside Tour

Pick-ups from 1pm at Letchworth, Baldock, Stevenage and Hitchin stations. We will visit several pubs west of Hitchin. Cost approx £10. Please email chair@northherts.camra.org.uk to reserve a spot. Itinerary will be published before we set off on <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> and Facebook/CAMRANorthHerts

Sat 20: GBG2025 Selection Meeting (South Herts Branch West Zone)

12noon **Royston Club**, College Road, St. Albans

Sat 20: GBG2025 Selection Meeting (South Herts Branch South Zone)

12.30pm **Royston Club**, College Road, St. Albans

Sat 20: SH Branch Meeting and AGM

2pm **Royston Club**, College Road, St. Albans.

Wed 31: Baldock Social

Starting 8pm at the *Old White Horse*, then stopping at the *Cock*, the *Old White Lion* and the *Orange Tree*.

FEBRUARY**Thu 8: Bushey Social**

8.15pm *Three Crowns*, 1 High Road, WD23 1EA, then 9.15pm *King Stag*, 15 Bournehall Road, WD23 3EH, finishing 10pm *Swan*, 25 Park Road, WD23 3EE

Sat 10: North Herts Minibus Tour

Pick-ups from 1pm at Letchworth, Baldock, Stevenage and Hitchin stations. We will visit several pubs which are candidates for the 2025 Good Beer Guide. Cost approx £10. Please email chair@northherts.camra.org.uk to reserve a spot. The itinerary will be published before we set off on <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> and Facebook/CAMRANorthHerts

Mon 12: H&EB AGM + GBG2025 Selection**Meeting + PotY2024 Voting**

8.30pm *Belgian Brewer*, 11 Links Business Centre, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5NZ

Mon 19: SH Committee Meeting

7.45pm Six Bells, St. Michael's Street, St. Albans

Wed 21: NH Branch Meeting & Social

8pm Venue TBC, please see <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> and Facebook/CAMRANorthHerts closer to the date.

Mon 26: W&D Branch Meeting

8pm *West Herts Sports Club*, 8 Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP

MARCH**Wed 13: North Herts March Social**

8pm Pubs TBC. Please see <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/> and Facebook/CAMRANorthHerts closer to the date.

Fri 15: Croxley Green Social

8pm *Coach & Horses*, The Green, WD3 3HX, then 9.15pm *Artichoke*, The Green, WD3 3HN, finishing 10pm *Sportsman*, 2 Scots Hill, WD3 3AD

Formal Notice**South Herts CAMRA Branch AGM - 20/01/2024**

The branch will hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the **Royston Social Club, 12 College Road, St. Albans AL1 5ND** on **Saturday 20th January 2024** at approx. 3.30pm following a branch meeting which will **start at 2.00pm**.

The 2024 branch committee will be elected at the AGM as detailed in the Branch Constitution:

Nominations for membership of the Branch Committee shall be in writing or by email to the current Chair: Ian Boyd, 3 Nunnery Stables, St. Albans AL1 2AS; chair@southherts.camra.org.uk

Each nomination must be signed by a proposer and seconder, both of whom should be members of the Branch, and accompanied by evidence of the nominee's willingness to stand. If a vote is required, a secret ballot will take place at the AGM.

You will need your CAMRA membership card both to vote and enter the Club.

A buffet will be provided and four cask ales plus a real cider are expected to be on offer.

Hopefully you will be able to attend the AGM and seriously consider standing for membership of the Branch Committee and filling one of the many positions. Whilst our branch has a healthy membership of more than 2,000, its success is dependent on enough enthusiastic people taking on the challenge of being *active* members.

There will be a guest speaker for the afternoon, with full details announced nearer the time so, stay tuned to my monthly Newsletters to keep up to date with that and other announcements!

Ian Boyd
Branch Chair
South Herts CAMRA

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 northherts.camra.org.uk

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HERTS & ESSEX BORDERS CAMRA

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Hertfordshire Winner 2023
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Christmas Cheer

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Where'er his stages may have been,
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The warmest welcome - at an inn.

William Shenstone (1714-1763)

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