

FREE



HERTFORDSHIRE

Pints of View



Summer Edition 2024

Issue No. 310

My 3 bold missions:

- 1. NO handpump hijack!**
- 2. NO short measures!**
- 3. NO cloudy beer!**

CAMRA

might be onto something...

TIM MARTIN



POV EXCLUSIVE

INTERVIEW

New 'Spoons in Welwyn Garden City, Cheshunt & Borehamwood?
"We'd love to open up... find me the right buildings!"

New in this issue:

The Pints of Interview
World-Wise Webb
Brewer's View



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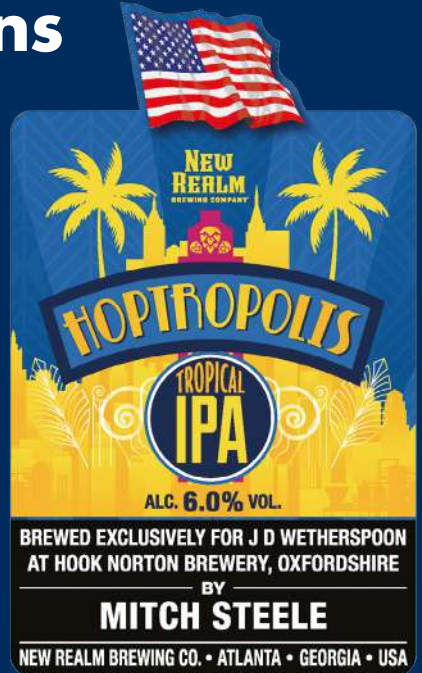
Real-ale events at Wetherspoon

Mitch Steele returns

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APRIL – JUNE guest ale list available now



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Thanks to this issue's contributors!

Andrew Vaughan	Paul Coard
Georgina Donatantonio	Phil Defriez
Jared Ward-Brickett	Roger Protz
Kathryn Flagner	Sarah Wragg
Les Middlewood	Steve Bury
Norman Samuels	Steve Thompson
Paul Donatantonio	Tim Webb

... and advertisers, without whom this magazine would not exist!

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Is your local pub under threat?

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Campaign
for
Real Ale

Starting Pint

Quiz Time

Who's the boss of Stonegate, the country's largest Pub Company with nearly 5,000 pubs? No idea? And what do you mean you're not sure if you've ever drunk in a Stonegate pub? Oh, you haven't heard of Stonegate...

How about Star Pubs & Bars? Still no idea? Well it has around 2,500 pubs and is owned by Heineken, who you definitely *will* have heard of.

Anyway, in case you're interested, the answers are:

David McDowall (ex Brewdog) who's been MD at Stonegate for just over a year and;

Lawson Mountstevens, who's been Star's Managing Director for 8 years.

OK try this one. The boss of Wetherspoon?

I bet you shouted out TIM MARTIN before I'd even typed 'spoon'.

Love him or hate him, EVERYONE'S heard of Sir Tim Martin, or maybe that should be Sir Tim Marmite? The great range of cask ales, extensive pub-food menu, absence of music, cracking value and often iconic re-purposed buildings help to create such an instantly recognisable brand that the chain is often assumed to be the country's largest. In fact, with just over 800 pubs, it sits towards the bottom of the UK's Top-10 Largest Pub Companies.

Regular readers will be familiar with our *Wether Report* column in *Pints of View*, where we provide comment on all things Wetherspoon, be it bouquet or brickbat. Well, in this issue we go one better.

In *The Pints of Interview*, Sir Tim reveals how it all started and commits to Wetherspoon taking the lead in supporting CAMRA with three key issues debated at the Members' Weekend, AGM and Conference in Dundee last month. Read it and find out why you might want to be at next year's event in Torquay.



New Contributors

The last issue of *Pints of View* saw Roger Protz pen his first regular column in *Roger... and out*. This issue sees another two new regular columns: *World-Wise Webb* and *Brewer's View*.

Tim Webb is an international beer judge, beer writer and broadcaster, who used to serve on CAMRA's National Executive. Like Roger, he is a passionate believer that 'craft' is defined by the country's smaller independent brewers that existed long before Brewdog came barking onto the scene. Tim says that he will always associate St Albans with HQ, even after the caravan ups and leaves for Luton.

Jared Ward-Brickett is a beer writer, the Chair of Mid Chilterns CAMRA and the larger-than-life PR Director of Tring Brewery. Established in 1992, Tring are Hertfordshire's 'oldest-of-the-new' brewers and not only surviving, but thriving. Jared loves great beer and is never happier than when downing a craft-brewed, flavoursome pint - that may or may not have come from a cask.

Back then...

The case of *'McMullen v Bury'*, (see *Readers Write and Steve's Shout*), prompted me to search the *Pints of View* archives for the true version of history. I found it within *The Hertfordshire Newsletter* (this magazine's predecessor) from exactly 25 years ago, along with other gems in 'anniversary issues' from 10 and 5 years ago. Look out for a few spot features headed *'Back then...'*

The Beer Festival Season - a time to be jolly!

Never before have so many local pubs advertised their Beer Festivals. The combination of these and the larger CAMRA-run events should mean there's a festival within reach of everyone. So check out pages 38 - 46, put some dates in your diary and go along to support our great Hertfordshire pubs!

Paul Donatantonio
Editor

Readers Write

Sir charged too much?

At a recent rural-pub beer festival, the price of a pint was £4.50 and a half was charged at £2.50; a loading of 25p (11%). Last year a city pub was charging £3/pint and £2/half; a surcharge of 33.3%. But first prize goes to a pub near Crewe Station, though many years ago, that was offering a pint deal at £1. The price of a half was 95p; an incredible 90% loading. Has anybody yet come across a half pint being charged at more than a full pint? These examples of overcharging can only be construed as greed and serious examples of destroying cask ale sales.

John Crowhurst

Ed says: For reasoning explained previously in *Pints of View*, I'm normally content with paying a reasonable surcharge of maybe up to 5% for a half pint. In fact, I feel happier knowing

that I'll be paying £2.10 for a half versus £4.00 for a pint, because I've seen the prices clearly displayed on a blackboard, than when I've paid £2.00 but seen no prices on display.

The reality is that CAMRA turns a blind eye to pubs that fail to clearly display prices, despite its Campaigning Policy Document stating that "to avoid the possibility of misleading omission, price lists should be clearly displayed at the point of sale...". We, correctly, exclude pubs from GBG that are guilty of misleading dispense, and should treat pubs that fail to display prices with the same sanction.

But back to the level of surcharge for a half pint. Whilst £2 v £3 is, I agree, unacceptable greed, I would have thought that the 95p v £1 'pint deal' is rather different. I wonder what the pint price was without the deal?



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Ginger Angel was a Dark Horse!

I read with interest in *Pints of View* [issue 309], Les Middlewood's article on Dark Horse beers. I remember enjoying them when they were available. While in the pub trade, I ordered a firkin of their stunning Fallen Angel ginger beer. This was still extremely lively when spiled a week after settling on the stillage. Four pints had to be drawn off to reduce the pressure. I know the purists will decry the use of ingredients over and above the basic malt, hops and water but Fallen Angel was one of the best beers I have ever sampled and I would welcome another brewer reusing the recipe.

John Crowhurst

Ed Says: *With regard to the addition of 'other ingredients' I admit to be something of a purist. However, I certainly don't decry their use, but strongly believe that labelling regulations which don't mandate an ingredient list are not fit for purpose.*

I'm not clear from the letter whether or not John is custodian of the recipe that he is inviting another brewer to reuse. Assuming that he is, would any brewers reading this letter who wish to rise to the challenge of recreating Fallen Angel please get in touch with Pints of View.

Breathing New Life into Old Stories

Goodness gracious me, I never thought I would see the day that Mr Steve Bury would promote... yes promote... the use of cask breathers/aspirators in his article 'Why do Pubs serve lacklustre beer?' Having demonised their use for more than 30 years, banned us from attending the Great British Beer Festival and writing interminably about how we were bastardising our cask beers... it beggars belief. But it is so encouraging to see that you can still teach old dogs new tricks! I'm now going to lie down.

Fergus McMullen DL

Production & Sales
Director, McMullen & Sons

Ed says: *...presumably not under a blanket of CO2? But seriously, it's good to know that Pints of View is read by brewers, as well as drinkers, as we do aim to engage everyone with an interest in beer, cider*

and perry. Having also read Mr Bury's response to your letter in 'Steve's Shout', it would appear recollections/interpretations of events from 30 plus years ago do vary, somewhat!

CAMRA says: *Aside from the traditional Scottish air pressure system, we do not endorse any dispense system for cask beers that involves applying extraneous CO2, nitrogen or any other gas directly to the beer, but we have a neutral position on the use of cask breathers.*

Back then, 25 years ago...

McMullens update...

CAMRA, McMullens and the Press

At CAMRA's national AGM on 17th/18th April in Hove, a motion was carried which means that the campaign will be taking action against McMullens. This is because since September 1997 they have refused

to recognise a CAMRA-appointed Brewery Liaison Officer.

The Publican was the first publication to report on the decision and unfortunately got it wrong. Other articles in the local press have used the piece and mistakenly printed the same errors.

McMullens pubs are not banned from CAMRA guides and publications. Only Mac's pubs that serve all their beers on cask breather will be excluded from the Good Beer Guide. There will be more McMullen Pubs in the 2000 Good Beer Guide than the 1999 edition.

The second issue is that of the cask breather itself.

It is CAMRA's national policy not to accept cask breather dispense. This policy is supported by all the CAMRA branches in McMullens trading area. For some reason it has been suggested that the dispute is a personal matter led by Steve Bury, the appointed Brewery Liaison Officer, in conjunction with South Hertfordshire branch of CAMRA. This is not the case. McMullen's will not accept a CAMRA representative, no matter which branch they are from. McMullens are insisting that CAMRA accepts the cask breather and until we do so they will not recognise us.

This being the case I was surprised to see McMullens quote in the "Herald" that they would not comment until they have had a full report back on the debate. As they are refusing to speak to us, who from CAMRA will be giving them this information. CAMRA would like to resolve our differences with McMullens: we support local independent brewers, but as a consumer organisation we cannot be dictated to by them either.

The Hertfordshire Newsletter no. 175 - June/July 1999

Campaign Column

BAN Short Measures

In April, a Motion was passed at CAMRA's Annual Conference to mount a vigorous campaign to persuade the major political parties to include commitments in their manifestos to legislate that A PINT OF DRAUGHT BEER IS A PINT OF LIQUID PLUS ANY HEAD. However, as the expectation was that a General Election would be in early winter rather than early summer, I suspect the horse has probably bolted.

All very frustrating, as this is another subject that CAMRA has been banging on about for nigh on half a century, yet governments both blue and red have ultimately chosen to ignore not only the voice of CAMRA's peak 200,000

membership, but also the interests of the country's 20+ million pub-going consumers.

Now, CAMRA's position has been bolstered by an independent report published at the end of May by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), which found 70% of the beer and wine it sampled across the country was being short measured. It calculated, somehow, that an average beer drinker was therefore losing around £88.40 a year.

Labour MP for Birmingham, Yardley Jess Phillips said that *"being able to afford to go out for a drink is not easy and you should get what you pay for"*. Speaking

on behalf of CAMRA, I say *"hear, hear"*. Let's hope that in the event of being re-elected to parliament, the feisty Ms Phillips doesn't soften her stance.

Back then, in 1976...



BAN Fake Handpumps

A double whammy from Carlsberg Marston's Brewing Company (CMBC) who have recently resorted to misleading consumers by 'hijacking' the handpump to serve keg beer AND by describing it as 'Fresh Ale'. CMBC says this is *"preserving the beloved hand pull ritual that delivers the traditional theatre of serve that ale is famed for"*. Pints of View says this is *"marketing spin, commonly referred to as 'bo**ocks'"*.

CAMRA believes consumers deserve better than CMBC play-acting at serving cask-conditioned ale - a product they claim to champion while closing breweries and removing cask lines from bars. Our Handpump Hijack campaign calls on brewers to serve beers in a way that won't mislead their customers.

That said, fake handpumps are nothing new. It's another issue that CAMRA has highlighted and fought against since its early days.

Back then, in 1976...



The South Herts Newsletter no. 1 - July 1976

Steve's Shout

Setting the record straight

Not only was I interested to read Fergus McMullen's comments about Cask Breathers [see 'Reader's Write - Breathing new life into Old Stories'] I am also glad that he reads *Pints Of View*.

In reply, can I firstly give readers a brief history lesson. The Cask-Breather/Aspirator debate within CAMRA ran for many years during the 80s and 90s. The motion to CAMRA annual conference, which barred McMullen from having a stand at the Great British Beer Festival, was not mine; in fact it was put on the order paper by Herts Essex Borders branch and *opposed* by South Herts branch, which I was then a member of and continued to be until moving to the Isle of Sheppey 18 months ago. Andy Young, speaking against the proposition, argued that if the ban was imposed, there would be no way to remove it. Our delegation voted against the motion, but it was carried and sadly Mac's were banned from the country's premier beer festival.

It is true, however, that I agreed with CAMRA's policy against Cask Breathers, as I didn't think they were necessary in a time when pubs were booming and problems with low turnover of cask beer were rare.

The problem was that McMullen *insisted* on Cask Breathers being used in all of their managed pubs and if a cellar inspection revealed them to be absent, the manager was marked down. When CAMRA challenged Mac's on this, they denied it.

Interestingly, the Cask-Breather requirement was not imposed at Mac's tenanted pubs.

How different things were in the 80s compared with today. There were no excessive business rates, no enormous price hikes for utilities and raw materials, no beer duty escalator,



no smoking ban and the Chinese had not invented COVID!

Today's beer prices mean that a visit to the pub is now a special occasion for many and, unsurprisingly, beer sales have dropped drastically. Just to add to this bleak picture, Marston's are deceiving customers by serving long-life keg beer from handpumps. Unlike cask-conditioned (real) ale, it has been filtered in the

brewery to remove yeast and stop fermentation, before being kegged. The company misleadingly calls it "Fresh Ale". CAMRA correctly calls it a "Handpump Hijack". This is far worse than, back in the 70s, when top pressure CO2 was used as a means of dispense; at least the beer had been conditioning (fermenting) in the cask before the CO2 was added.

Back to my article; I was not giving a 'blanket' recommendation of Cask Breathers, I was just recognising that CAMRA no longer opposes them (our policy document takes a neutral position) and, in these days of slow sales, they have a part to play in making cask more widely available in pubs with a low turnover of ale.

My view is still that pubs with well-trained staff selling a firkin (72 pts) of beer within a few days should have no need to use Cask Breathers.

I'd like to finish by saying that I recognise and applaud the part that Fergus has played in keeping McMullen & Sons an independent family brewer and I have enjoyed their cask ales over the years.

Steve Bury
Chair
Swale CAMRA

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Real stories, real people, **real ale**



World-Wise Webb

Is it time to stop saying 'real ale'?

I recently posted a question in CAMRA's sparky chatroom, Discourse, intending to get people thinking. I asked whether CAMRA members should drop the term 'real ale', and instead say 'cask' when they mean cask ale, or 'live', if they ever need a collective term for all the different formats of 'real'.

I have two main objections to 'real ale'.

The first is that it has two, increasingly incompatible meanings, which leads easily to confusion. Many people say 'real ale' when they mean 'cask', while others use the same term to refer to beers that are bottle-conditioned, or conditioned in a tank, can or keg. Yet bottle-conditioned beer is not cask ale in a bottle. The world's best bottle-conditioned beers are way too classy for that!

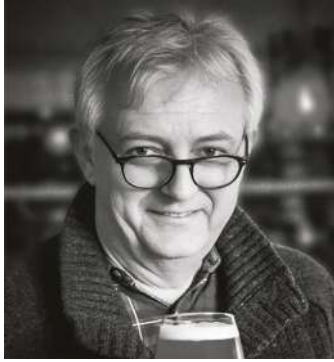
Describing beers as 'cask' singles them out for special attention, and allows them to be subject to their own good practice rules. Which is what we want, surely?

Followers of lesser gods

My second objection to 'real ale' is more profound.

The term was first coined in 1973 as a way of saying 'authentic' in plainer language. It was a cheeky way of implying that all beers except for cask, and a tiny cluster of surviving bottle-conditioned beers, were 'inauthentic', or fake. As most of the alternatives back then contained lots of adjunctive sugars and few hops, were fermented too fast, and underwent little conditioning, the put-down was well-earned.

Today, while such second-rate beers are still made (with some heavily advertised) other alternatives have carefully designed grain bills and intricate hop recipes, undergo careful fermentation and conditioning, and may even be barrel-aged. To imply that these are somehow lesser beers suggests that the accuser has much to learn about brewing.



The voice of the people

The response to my thread was interesting.

Some respondents suggested that this would mean CAMRA turning its back on cask ale and, for some reason that was beyond me, 3.8% ABV session beers in particular. Surely, calling a beer 'cask', is likely to gain it a wider fan base, allowing it a clearer identity that younger drinkers can

support without feeling they have joined the old fogeys?

CAMRA's increasingly unfounded claims about the supreme excellence of 'real ale' has led to it being seen as a flat, dull, brown beer, often served in poor condition, but eulogised by elitist old men who feel entitled to complain.

Changing the record

I would prefer cask to enjoy the image I overheard described at Cambridge Beer Festival 2016, by a young attendee, peeling his mates away from the craft and imported beer bars, to try a few cask ales, with the line, *"They're what you drink when you need something good but don't want to get pissed."*

Although a diverse Campaign, we are in general agreement that cask ale is badly in need of assistance. Its numbers are falling as it loses its natural habitat, the pub, and global firms like AB InBev and Heineken refuse to brew it.

My contribution to getting cask back on its feet, along with all the other good types of beer from independent brewers, is to use its correct name. In the UK, cask was the original craft beer, and my generation of cask drinkers were the first craft beer lovers. We need to embrace that.

Tim Webb
Beer writer

Co-author, *The World Atlas of Beer*
Exeter & Devon CAMRA

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Brewer's View

Rain, Rain GO AWAY!

Brewing is wet work. As the industry saying goes "brewing is 90% cleaning; the rest is brewing!". The billowing steam of brewday is symbolic of new beer, a fresh batch of ale being crafted for anticipating pint glasses. Sometimes this steam gathers, forming droplets that slide down glistening vessels. These liquified events are key to brewing and we'd have no luscious ale without them, one cause for concern however is a very damp Spring.



The word 'Spring' itself is emotive, conjuring images of flower shoots bursting through the earth and hurtling towards the gods, fully formed petals in a rainbow of colours bouncing in a light breeze. Nature's Spring aesthetic commands an exploration of the outdoors, a wistful walk culminating with a pint or three in a sun-drenched beer garden.

These ideals have been all but hypothetical this year, and at the time of writing, my shoes, hat, jacket, trousers and socks are all sodden from yet *another* torrential downpour, timed disastrously to ring in a big bank holiday weekend.

This foreboding weather is enough to cancel trips to the boozier, get-togethers with old acquaintances, family BBQs, picnics and those coveted wistful walks. Tailing the off-peak months of January and February, March and April have had little to offer to pubs in 2024 (a fate shared with local brewers, naturally), especially as consumers are continuing to feel the pinch of inflation, with record costs and fewer pennies in pockets all round.

Reports are that the sun is on its way, and though it may have been coy at first, we're hoping for a four-month residency above the skies of the British Isles, beaming rays and much, much drier days!

The Men's Euro's football tournament is set to

commence in a little over a month, with the Olympics and the men's T20 World Cup falling this year, to boot. Domestic football finals in the FA Cup, if not the Champions League, join a roster of annual televised fixtures such as Wimbledon, Ascot, Epsom and Eurovision – each taking place in lighter, brighter months.

Entertainment aside, traditional beer styles are seeing a revival of late, with a swathe of self-proclaimed 'pub explorers' appearing across social media channels. These new-age evangelists are a crowd that can take partial kudos for the meteoric rise of stout, with renewed affections for Guinness and its iconic, 'instagrammable' two-part pour (*number one beer in British pubs in terms of value sales, 2022*) introducing a fresh generation to styles within the ale family of beer.

Headaches from the fallout of COVID still linger, though most local pubs continue to throw doors open most-of-if-not-all week long. COVID 'shop local' sentiments seem to have stuck and more and more drinkers seem to be 'trading up' at the bar, opting to spend their ever-precious pounds on more discerning and often locally-made products.

We hope to have a bright Spring and Summer, full of entertainment, bolstered by a fresh love for pubs and local ale. We'll keep our fingers crossed and raise a glass; to the promise of Spring!

Jared Ward-Brickett

*British Guild of Beer Writers
Chair, Mid Chilterns CAMRA*



Pints of Interview

Sir Tim Martin - The (Real Ale) Pub Landlord

Our meeting is arranged for a Wednesday afternoon in early May at the Railway Bell, 13 East Barnet Rd, New Barnet, (ex Herts.) – a ‘Spoons rarity in that it was originally a pub, built not long after New Barnet station opened in 1850. For a

spell starting in the 1980s, it had become the trendy-at-the-time ‘Rat & Parrot’, but Sir Tim & Co returned the establishment to its original name for the August 1990 opening of Wetherspoon’s 20th pub (or thereabouts). And this is a particularly good one, having since been in the Good Beer Guide no fewer than 21 times.

I ask “*which one?*” to which Sir Tim responds “*THAT one*”, pointing to a 1982 advert for ‘Dick’s Bar’ in fellow CAMRA Branch Magazine ‘London Drinker’, that I’d brought along. The name, explains Sir Tim, was copied from a trendy ‘Dick’s Bar’, somewhere in the Alps, made famous by Princess Di on a skiing trip before she married!



Sir Tim smiles!

I find Sir Tim with a couple of near-empty half pint glasses at a table in the main bar area. He greets me, warmly, and says they were just tasters. I put down my own *Nethergate Hopweaver (5.4% ABV)*.

The pub that started it (not Dick’s!)

I was curious about a couple of things on the Dick’s Bar ad:

Firstly, I ask: “*Sole Proprietor: LORD GNOME’ - what’s all that about?*” Sir Tim leans back in his chair, guffaws loudly and tells me: “*Lord Gnome is a guy...*” and then interrupts himself with: “*I must take a photo of that!*” before guffawing again and snapping a pic of the ad with his phone. A shake of the head is followed by “*that’s so funny, that is hilarious. Yeah... so what was the question you asked me?*”

“ I suppose I was the real Lord Gnome!”

I ask about his day.

“*The first pub I did was the White Swan in Islington and then the Mossy Well in Muswell Hill before coming here - it’s all go! I normally spend Tuesday and Wednesday touring pubs and occasionally weekends as well - I used to do more weekends when I was a bit younger. I go round the country; the other week I got the train to Lancaster from Exeter, and then ended up in Glasgow for a couple of days before getting the train back to London, as our offices are in Watford. Our first office used to be in Crouch End above a pub.*”

Feeling instantly at ease, I remind Sir Tim that he was about to tell me about Lord Gnome. “*Ah yes, Lord Gnome comes from Private Eye [magazine]*”. We agree that the character is fictitious, but are unsure whether a Newspaper Proprietor or Swiss Banker. Anyway, Sir Tim eventually admits: “*I suppose I was the real Lord Gnome!*”

The second curiosity is the reference to the beers being



March 1982 (London Drinker archives)

“In fact we want to double our ale sales over the next 10 years; that’s my ambition.”

“also on tap at Martin’s Free House, 89 Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, London N10”. This pub, as some will know, was the first (opened 9th December 1979) in what would become the Wetherspoon empire. However, I remind Sir Tim that, according to popular history and the company’s own website, the pub was renamed ‘Wetherspoons’ early in 1980, yet this ad was from March 1982.

Sir Tim recalls the front window being smashed within a few weeks of him taking on the pub and the replacement having the name ‘Wetherspoons’. He tells me *“I don’t know why it’s [still] called Martin’s Free House [in the ad]. You’ve got me there!”* Cue more laughter. *“I’m wondering if I called the company Wetherspoon, but left the name of the pub as Martin’s Free House?”* That certainly makes sense, as it would be the first of Wetherspoon branding being applied to hundreds of differently-named pubs up and down the country over the subsequent 40+ years.

The ‘Eureka’ moment

I want to understand what motivated Sir Tim to become a publican. Would Wetherspoon exist if he didn’t drink ale?

“I certainly wouldn’t have started if I didn’t like pubs, but I think ale was the catalyst for me. People romanticise the past, but the pubs, generally,

really weren’t that good! I used to play squash at Muswell Hill and someone in the bar said a guy had opened a pub down the road, selling Ruddles County, or whatever it was. So after I finished work, whilst I was doing my bar exams [law not pub], I’d somehow get up to Muswell Hill around nine o’clock in the evening and have a few pints. Andrew Marler had an 8-year lease and wanted to move onto pastures new and asked me if I fancied taking over. So I sold my flat, made five grand or something, and that was enough for a deposit on the pub.”

I ask Sir Tim if he was thinking big, right from the start.

“I’m not sure if I was thinking big. I realised that the pub he ran had a lot more attraction for people like me, and was busier than the big brewery pubs. So I think what gave me my break was the fact that North London was so dominated by major breweries, that ale from small breweries was almost completely absent. It was providing those ales which was the engine [for Wetherspoon pubs]. You can tell from London Drinker, that we always advertised ale as our point of difference, as all the other pubs were tied.”

Beers and buildings before business?

I wondered if Sir Tim ever allowed his heart to rule his head?



Railway Bell, New Barnet in 2024



July 1980 or before (London Drinker archives)



Imperial, Exeter (Wetherspoon website)

He chuckles...*"Pub number one. I was 24 years old, maybe 25. I did the cellar every morning from 6 [o'clock]. Quite a physical job. I'd finish at about 11 [in the morning] having just put on these beers and reward myself with a pint of Truman's Sampson and a Slim Panatella. But I soon figured that to run a pub, that's not a very good approach, though it was quite common in those days. So I reverted to only having a couple of halves after 9 o'clock in the evening, though even that is now an anathema, isn't it? Then again, maybe tenants might still get away with it!"*

Sir Tim Martin continues... *"I suppose, if you like buildings, there's always a temptation to take one which requires mammoth investment to convert into something special - almost a desire to make a statement of the building."* I chip in *"Buildings you can be proud of, some are phenomenal, aren't they?"* Sir Tim, with a nod of pride agrees: *"Yes, some of them ARE phenomenal."*

Is real ale here to stay?

I ask: *"How would you react if a consultant were to tell you to strip out all your handpumps and go keg only to make more money?"* The response is reassuringly unequivocal: *"I'd say 'you're a fantasist!', because it's just not true for*

explains: "I think we made a mistake, in some cases, by opening pubs a bit too close to each other, but we're not going to sell many more and so we can now build up the numbers. We just opened a pub at Euston Station [Captain Flinders], but we still

“ Yes, we'd love to open up... find me the right buildings!”

us, for our style of pub, to take out something we're selling a lot of. No. That is not going to happen."

The future

In the company's last Interim Report, Sir Tim estimated a potential for about 1,000 pubs. Yet back in 2015, Wetherspoon pub numbers peaked at around 950 and have since fallen back to just over 800. I ask what will be done to reverse the trend, and suggest it might take 10 or 15 years to reach 1,000. Sir Tim

don't have one in Paddington. And there are quite a lot of towns and airports we're not in, so I'm reasonably hopeful. Part of it [our growth], as well, is we've been making existing pubs bigger, like this [the Railway Bell], by adding on a bit at the back. In fact we want to double our ale sales over the next 10 years; that's my ambition."

I tell Sir Tim that Hertfordshire can help, mentioning Welwyn Garden City, Cheshunt and Borehamwood as large towns that are now all 'Spoons-free with limited real-ale pubs. *"Yes, we'd love to open up... find me the right buildings!"* is the enthusiastic response!

The manager of every Wetherspoon Pub is now a CAMRA Member

I ask about Sir Tim's role in setting this up. He tells me that he wasn't involved and has no direct contact with CAMRA HQ, however, *"most of our really good ale guys have quite a good close connection with CAMRA, so I think it's a good idea to be a CAMRA Member. I think it's got to be the way to go. Be*



Admiral Byng, Potters Bar - Tring Takeover of guest taps in 2024

close to your market”.

And in case you're wondering, YES, Sir Tim is a paid-up Member and has been for years.

Sir Tim then confides that he was recently at one of their pubs and asked for a taster, but it was cloudy. *“The person who served it just didn't know. If they'd been CAMRA, they'd have changed it. We just need to try and educate our staff more.”* I comment *“that's where we can help”*.

Keeping the CAMRA theme going, I then mention the recent Members' Weekend and some of the Motions put to Conference.

Short Measures

I start with: *“You know that CAMRA's very into ‘if you order a pint, it should be a pint of liquid’? What are your feelings?”* Sir Tim starts to reply: *“Well, we're about the only company that adopted the lined glasses, many moons*

“ Well, we're about the only company that adopted the lined glasses, many moons ago.”

ago.” I take this as a cue to dip into my bag, pull out an over-sized lined glass that I'd just happened to bring along and thrust it in front of Sir Tim. *“Like this one of yours from last year's Great British Beer festival?”* I ask, continuing: *“What I see at the Admiral Byng [Potters Bar] is that they try hard to pour me a pint, but God knows how much goes down the side of the glass and into the drip tray. And it takes them ages.”* Sir Tim nods: *“Yeah, maybe we could do it again.”*

Hazy Descriptions

I continue: *“You mentioned cloudy beer earlier. Another thing discussed by CAMRA is that if the brewer intends a beer to be cloudy or hazy, it should state it on the pump clip! It makes life so much easier, for staff and*

for customers, and the pub and brewery don't get a bad reputation when a customer thinks they've been passed-off cloudy beer. Also, there are people like me who seek out hazy, American-hopped ales. It just needs some liaising between pubs and brewers.”

Sir Tim gives a reassuring: *“I'm writing it down. I'm writing it down.”* He's actually taken quite a few notes, whilst we've been talking.

'Fresh' Beer Fraud

I ask Sir Tim: *“Does fresh beer mean anything to you? CAMRA calls it the Handpump Hijack, where handpumps are being used to dispense keg beer that the brewer describes as ‘fresh’, whatever that means.”* Sir Tim responds: *“Is this the Marston's thing? I don't know if they should be left to their own devices. I don't think it will take off.”* I then ask: *“But could it take off in Wetherspoons if they came to you and ask*



City of London Trading Standards - short-measure crackdown



Spot the cloudy one

if you want to try it?" Sir Tim looks underwhelmed: "I would say that we have no plans to introduce it."

I should then have followed up with: "Of course, pubs using a misleading method of dispense are ineligible for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide". Wetherspoon has 236 pubs in the 2024 Guide and, I'm sure, would hope for more, not fewer, in the future.

Torquay Members' Weekend, AGM & Conference Guest Speaker

When arranging the interview, I'd asked whether Sir Tim might be available to speak

“most of our really good ale guys have quite a good connection with CAMRA”

on the Saturday, knowing that he lives in nearby Exeter. I was told that he would, so thought it best to check with him, directly, before our chat draws to a close.

"So, you're happy to come to Members' Weekend next April?" I ask semi-rhetorically.

"Yeah, and give a talk", comes the swift reply. In which case, I suppose I'd better let

HQ know...

I thank Sir Tim and he tells me "It's a pleasure. I've enjoyed the conversation". He's about to set off to pub number four of the day: the New Crown in Southgate and leaves with: "I'm going to do a runner." Didn't we used to call it a 'crawl'?

Paul Donatantonio

CAMRA Member Benefits include £30 (Single) / £40 (Joint) vouchers redeemable in all Wetherspoon pubs



ASK, "IS IT CASK?"

The launch of 'Fresh Ale' by Carlsberg Marston's Brewing Company (CMBC) is a handpump hijack, which misleads consumers into thinking they will be served a cask-conditioned beer - which is far from the case.

Pints of View 309 Hertfordshire Quiz Answers

1. Nicholas Breakspeare (Adrian IV)
2. 'Trust and Fear Not'
3. Mobbs Hole Farm, near Ashwell
4. 1903
5. St Mary's Church, Hitchin
6. Hereford and Hampshire
7. 'Joyride'
8. Potters Bar
9. Watford
10. The Herts County Show
11. 1973
12. The Great Plague (1563)
13. Stephen Hawking
14. Alesha Dixon
15. Weston. (Holy Trinity Church)
16. France (La Loupe) and Scotland (Glasgow)
17. An Addis toothbrush
18. Eric Morecambe (John Eric Bartholomew)
19. The Gate House in St Albans
20. None - it was a hoax

Wether Report

'Spoons increases CAMRA membership

The big news is that EVERY Wetherspoon pub has either a Pub Manager or Real Ale Champion who is a signed-up CAMRA Member. That being the case, I thought it might be interesting to find out who initiated the idea and how Wetherspoon intends to make the most of the relationship. I asked Jen Swindells, who works on 'Real Ale' in the company's marketing department.

Hi Paul,

CAMRA memberships had been discussed for a while. All managers were signed up a few years ago and through internal discussions it was felt to be the right time to bring them back. It was John Cottrell at CAMRA who assisted with the memberships.

We hope it will help pubs build relationships with their local CAMRA groups and become more involved with local ale initiatives, as well as keeping CAMRA up to date with any ale events at Wetherspoon.

The pubs have been made aware through weekly communications. A link to find their local branch has been sent out so that they can make contact with them. There are guides on the internal systems that they can access to help them build worthwhile working relationships with their local group who may be able to assist or advise them about ale if they are new to the pub.

Thanks

Jen Swindells | Marketing

I would have thought that Branches could play their part by finding an active member willing and able to be the 'Friendly Face' who offers advice and liaises between pubs & branch.

Ultimately, if CAMRA can assist with enhancing the quality of real (cask) ale being served, whilst helping to ensure style and brewery selection are appropriate for the locality, then that has got to be positive for cask ale, for drinkers, for independent brewers, for CAMRA and for Wetherspoon.

Another strange quirk regarding Wetherspoon's closing time

 Campaigning



Gary 

1  29 Mar

I know there has been a previous thread regarding Wetherspoons closing times. A strange variation I came across tonight was that one of their pubs would serve until midnight but only to customers who had arrived before 11pm. So because we arrived at 11.30pm we were refused service but customers already there could still order drinks for another half hour.

Should anyone on the upper floor of Wetherspoon House be reading this, do please write in to let us know what's behind this. Will it be local licensing rules, or has a manager introduced his own interpretation of 'Spoons opening hours'?

Join the New River Line Rail Ale Trail on Saturday 29 June



South Herts and Herts & Essex Borders branch members will be “doing the **New River Line Rail Ale Trail**” on the 29th - meeting at the Crown, Old Nazeing Road, Broxbourne from 12 noon.

Copies of the Trail Booklet will be available on the day.

Our typical afternoon itinerary will be:

13.15 Train at **Broxbourne** station to Rye House arriving 13.18. Visit the Rye House pub.

14.18 Train at **Rye House** to St Margaret's arriving 14.21. Visit any of the three pubs listed.

15.51 Train at **St Margaret's** to Ware arriving 15.55. A selection of town pubs is on offer.

17.52 Train at **Ware** to **Hertford East** arriving 18.02. Another selection of town pubs.

Trains run every 30 minutes calling at all five stations. An adult return ticket from Broxbourne to Hertford East costs £7.60 - with Railcard £5.00. Many of the pubs in the booklet offer cooked meals.

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[facebook.com/NorthMymmsSocialClub/](https://www.facebook.com/NorthMymmsSocialClub/)

Ale Trips & Trails

The New River Line Rail Ale Trail Booklet

From Broxbourne to Hertford East

Before your next journey into East Hertfordshire, seek out the new free booklet *"The New River Line Rail Ale Trail"*, published by The New River Line Community Rail Partnership with significant input from the South Hertfordshire and Herts & Essex Borders Branches of CAMRA. The A6-sized, 24-page colour booklet includes information on train travel, local towns & villages and all real ale pubs found along or nearby the eight-mile route, featuring eighteen main pub entries plus information on all others, cask ale and local breweries.

The New River Line Community Rail Partnership was established to bring together local authorities, community groups and other organisations to work with Greater Anglia Rail to promote and celebrate the branch line from Broxbourne to Hertford East, which features the stations of Broxbourne, Rye House, St Margaret's, Ware and Hertford.

Community Rail Partnership Officer, Katie Goldthorpe says....

"It has been a real pleasure to work with my colleagues at CAMRA. Without their local knowledge and insights, I wouldn't have been able to produce such a guide. Community Rail Partnerships are all about collaboration with local organisations and The Rail Ale Trail is a brilliant example of this".

The New River Line follows the course of the New River (a water course completed in 1613 to take fresh drinking water from the springs at Chadwell and Great Amwell to London). Together with the River Lea, which runs close by, it gives access to nature reserves, rural landscapes and leisure opportunities. Find the RSPB reserve at Rye House, discover



the Lee Valley Country Park from Broxbourne where you can hire a boat, enjoy a ramble on foot, or cycle along the River Lea towpath to Hertford. Attractions along the line include go-karting at Rye House, Scott's Grotto in Ware, Hertford Castle and the town's Blue Plaque trail of significant buildings. Ware and Hertford both have interesting museums and a welter of independent shops, cafes and restaurants.

Top it all with a pint or two of cask ale at some of the many pubs featured in the Trail guide and let the train lead you home.



Pictured above, at the Jolly Fisherman in Stanstead Abbots is the booklet production team, I-r, Nick Atkinson and Les Middlewood (both South Herts Branch), Katie Goldthorpe, Brendan Sothcott (Herts/Essex Borders Branch). The team was completed by Norman Samuels (also Herts/Essex Borders Branch).

Whilst stocks last, copies of the booklet can be found in the 18 main pub entries, in local Tourist Offices and at town libraries - as well as at local CAMRA events and beer festivals. It can also be found online at: <https://www.newriverline.org/news/new-rail-ale-trail/>

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA



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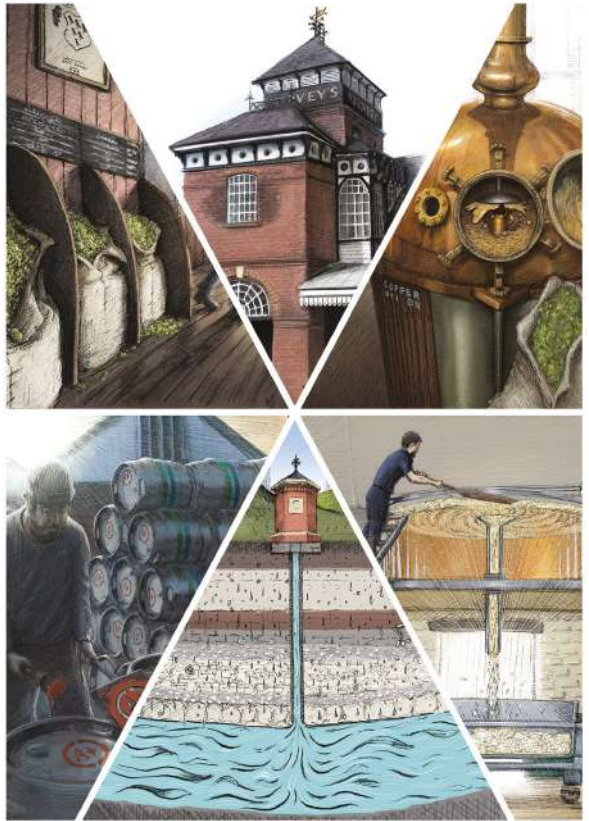
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The brewery was rebuilt in 1881 by Messrs Card & Son of Lewes from designs of the eminent brewery architect William Bradford of Carlton Chambers, Regent Street, London. During construction work, they unearthed the weather vane that sits on the top of the brewery tower. Dated 1621, it is believed to have originally graced St Thomas a Becket's Church in Cliffe High Street. In 1985, the smaller tower was added to the original in order to increase our production capacity. Built in the exact style of the existing building, it was the recipient of a Civic Trust Award and our listed status followed shortly afterwards.

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Herts Pubs, Clubs & Breweries

Oxhey Village Brewfest 2024

Fortune smiled on Oxhey Village on Saturday 13th April, when the seemingly relentless rainclouds cleared, and the crowds came out to enjoy themselves at **'Brewfest'**.

The event is organised by Oxhey Village Brewery with the help of the Oxhey Village Environment Group and takes place every year at two pubs, the **Rifle Volunteer** and **Villiers Arms**, that host beer festivals, lay on barbeques, and provide other entertainment, including a raffle raising money for Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care.

Watford & District branch joined the fun at the Rifle Volunteer, where **Oxhey Village Brewery** had their latest ale, **Oxhey Brown (4.0% ABV)**. This was a classic brown ale, which is very unusual to find these days. With any luck, this will be the start of a revival for this neglected style and I hope we see it in more local pubs. Amongst the other beers on offer at the Rifle Volunteer



were brews from Marston's, nearby Rebellion, and local favourite Tring. I tried **Rebellion Gold (4.4% ABV)** and a rather nice **Adnams/Vocation** collaboration called **Balmy Days (4.3% ABV)**, which is being promoted as a Spring IPL (India Pale Lager)! It seems that no beer style is safe



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from being turned into an IPA version, but this one was definitely worth seeking out.

We then headed off to the Villiers Arms, where the beer garden was busy with families enjoying Billbies & Co. burgers and the dry weather. As I walked around the garden, I noticed that there had been a bit of a change. The landlord confirmed that the garden had been extended. Apparently, their neighbours had asked whether the pub wanted to buy some of their land and he had said 'Yes, please!'



Once again, plenty of Tring beers were available on the stillage, along with ales from Rebellion and Chiltern Breweries. I tried **Tring Tea Kettle Stout (4.7% ABV)** and the refreshing **Chiltern Hop, Spring and Jump (3.8% ABV)**.

After Oxhey Village Brewfest we wandered down towards Bushey station and stopped off in the **Railway Arms**; a Greene King pub that started selling Tring beer around the time of the pandemic. It was so popular that the pub kept **Tring** alongside the Greene King brands. This time the pub was serving **Sidepocket for a Toad (3.6% ABV)** and the rarer Tea Kettle Stout; I don't recall the pub having a dark beer from Tring before. Perhaps the news about such dark beers being the fastest growing style in Britain will lead to more stouts and porters in the Watford area? If Oxhey Village Brewery get their Oxhey Brown into a few more pubs, then brown ale might be the next style to see a resurgence. Fingers crossed!

Andrew Vaughan
Chair

Watford & District CAMRA

3 Brewers + 1 Beer = Silver Medal

South Herts CAMRA Members convened at the John Bunyan, Coleman Green on Sunday 17th March for a well-attended presentation of the **Hertfordshire Beer of the Year 2023 Silver Medal Certificate** to Mark Fanner & Matt Sutton from the **3 Brewers of St Albans**, handily based at Symondshyde Farm - a stone's throw from the pub, which is now a freehouse serving top-quality 3 Brewers beers.

The Silver Medal for the brewery's **Special English Ale (4.8% ABV)** was won at last year's St Albans Beer & Cider Festival and is the latest of several awards for this brew.

Those hardy souls completing the long walk to the pub received a warm welcome enhanced by a few pints of **3 Brewers Classic (4.1% ABV)** and the aforementioned **3 Brewers Special** - great options for re-hydration!

Ian Boyd, Branch Chair, presented the Certificate and made a congratulatory speech, with words kept to a minimum so that members' consumption was only slightly interrupted...



Mark Fanner & Matt Sutton with two smiles and one certificate

Thanks to landlords Anthony & Faith for hosting and to Mark & Matt for producing the excellent beer!

Steve Thompson
3 Brewers Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO)
South Herts CAMRA

Bar Billiards – A Table on its Last Legs?

Eighteen years ago I penned an article for *Pints of View* lamenting the disappearance of this once popular pub game. In the 1970s it was still regularly seen in Hertfordshire's pubs but by 2007 it had become a bit of a rarity – only a handful of tables remained. Bar billiards was a favourite of mine, I'd always dabbled, but it took a while to get quite good at it, learning my craft in the smoky public bars of Hertford, especially the **Duncombe Arms**, where competition with a band of keen exponents egged me on to greater scores – one night in 1987 reaching a game tally of over 6,000 – never to be repeated I hasten to add. In writing the article I suppose I was hoping that the game might find a renaissance in Hertfordshire but as time has passed the decline has sadly persisted.

In East and North Herts I can personally think of only two pubs with a table – the **White Horse in Hertford** [pictured right] tucked away in its own room on the first floor, popular with a small group of regulars and puzzled visitors – and the **Orange Tree in Baldock** where the table has reappeared in the games room, having been requisitioned for other purposes during the height of the pandemic. And clubs? I know that the **Royston Club in St Albans** has a table.

In its heyday, the game could be found in so many of our pubs – in a small alcove or in pride of place in a public bar. In Hertford, I can remember a time in the 1980s when there were seven or eight pubs with tables. The game shone brightest in the 1950s and 1960s when there were local and county leagues and national tournaments, but it was gradually pushed aside with the arrival of American pool. Even pool is now becoming an increasing rarity in pubs. Pub games have lost appeal in many pubs, or been removed, particularly those games which take up space. However, in a small number of community and village pubs, interest in pub games continues. And the upsurge in interest in TV darts following recent coverage may yet see more boards reappearing in our county pubs.

So, back to bar billiards, where did it come from and what is the current state of play?



English Bar Billiards is a table game played by potting balls with cues into 9 holes that carry differing points tariffs, with all shots taken from a small D-shaped area at one end of the table. The “bar” in the game’s name derives from both where it is most often played and because a wooden bar drops after a time limit (usually up to 17 minutes in England) preventing any more balls becoming available for use. A 50p or £1 coin is usually required to release the balls for play. There are seven white balls and one red which counts for double points. Three skittles or “mushrooms” are placed on the table – two white, one black – the capsizing of which will forfeit a break (white) or an entire



score (black). And the last ball must be potted in the “200” hole, avoiding the black skittle at all costs. In regional differences, some tables with four skittles might be found. The game’s strongest bastion of support can be found in the Channel Islands and along the English Channel, from Kent round as far as Hampshire, then up through Berkshire to Oxfordshire and Northants. The annual British Isles and World Championships are held in Jersey every November, overseen by the game’s governing body, the All-England Bar Billiards Association. The 2023 Champion is Matthew Jones from Buckinghamshire. For those of you who play the game, the world’s highest break, in a competitive match, is 29,900 – by Mark Trafford of Oxfordshire. Try getting anywhere near that! (it certainly puts my 6,000 into perspective). In Norwich there is a league involving six pubs.

As with so many of our pub games, its birth cannot be drilled down to one clear moment, but in the early 1930s an Englishman called David Gill came across a game called Russian Billiards being played in Belgium (thought to be called this to make it sound more exotic). He convinced the English manufacturer Jelks of Holloway Road, London to make a version of the game.

Alfred Sams and Sons, once of Briscoe Road, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire also laid claim to be the first to introduce the game and went on to make many hundreds of tables. With the newfound popularity of the game, publicans and club owners were queuing up to buy the tables, soon also being made by a number of



other manufacturers, the first league appearing in Oxfordshire in 1936. The table at the **White Horse, Hertford** is thought to be a Sams table.

If you are a publican reading this and you’ve been toying with the idea of installing a table, sift through the web – there are companies that hire or sell tables, though the purchase price of a newly and fully refurbished table can be in the region of £1,700 - £3,000.

Alas, the last bar billiards league in Hertfordshire – probably the one that operated in Watford in the 1980s - is long gone but the game hangs on in just a few Hertfordshire pubs and clubs. It’s a great game. If you come across it make sure you are carrying a few coins to drop into the time mechanism slot – then follows 17 minutes of triumph or calamity – perhaps in equal measure – but all fun, nevertheless. Someone tell me otherwise!

Please let *Pints of View* know of any other tables that still exist in the pubs and clubs out there in Hertfordshire.

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA



Game in Play – December 1938 at the Sun in Lemsford – photo: The Welwyn Times

Dry Cheshunt? – a Real Ale alert

In the last edition of *Pints of View*, in *Down Your way*, we reported on the sad plight of Borehamwood – there being only two pubs remaining where cask-conditioned ale can be sipped. Cheshunt is now approaching a similarly parlous state. And in both towns, are McMullen fast becoming the last bastion for real ale?

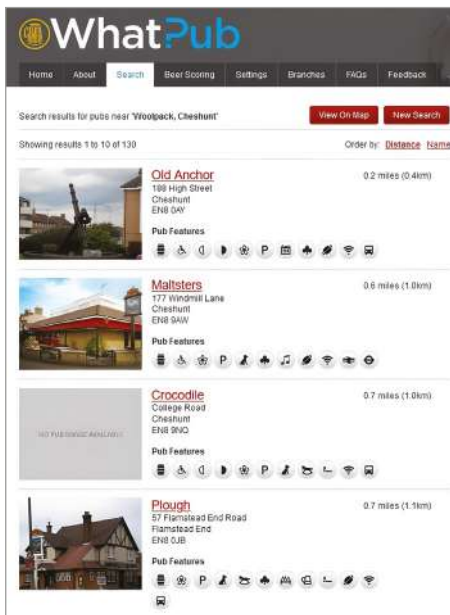
At a recent count, cask ale was being offered by only three pubs in Cheshunt and one in adjoining Flamstead End.

Cheshunt has seen a rapid decline in pub numbers – ten have closed in the last decade leaving only nine remaining – two of which are closed. Not all of these pubs offered cask ale but their passing is still a loss to members of the community and can be put down to all of the negative factors regularly aired in these pages – ridiculously low supermarket beer prices prompting more home drinking, comparatively high pub prices, inconsistent beer quality, Government policy on beer and pub taxation, Pub Company terms & conditions affecting leaseholders, the rise in craft-keg beers and changes in social behaviour.

Back in the 1970s, all McMullen pubs sold cask ale, though often blighted, in CAMRA's eyes, by the use of top pressure – an infusion of CO2 gas, rarely seen these days. Mac's eventually stopped this practice and were soon joined by the likes of Ind Coope and Greene King who also had significant tied estates in Hertfordshire.

As the popularity of real ale grew, a wave of new brewers and beers arrived – cask ale was flourishing. But are we now witnessing a serious reversal? Dr Adnams of Adnams, the Suffolk brewers, recently pointed to:

“.....[the] ongoing slump in the number of pubs



across Britain, and a 25% decline in the size of the cask beer market since 2019”.

Okay, we had the inevitable problems caused by the COVID pandemic, but after 50 years of cask ale popularity is the real ale bubble wobbling?

Of course, it can be argued that as long as there are enough pubs for the number of people that want to drink in them, then why should we expect more?

The worrying Borehamwood and Cheshunt situation is a juxtaposition to places like St Albans, Hertford and Ware, where real ale has a keen

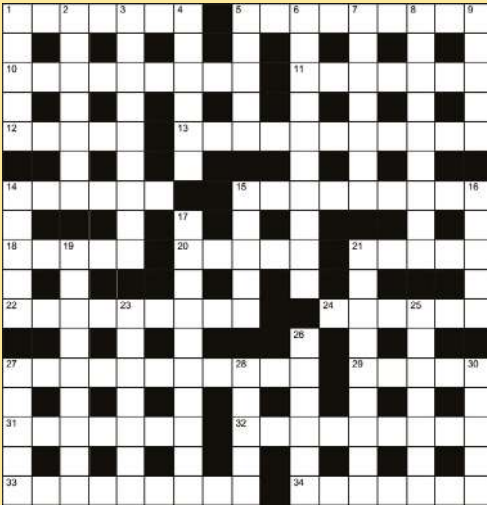
following. So, all is not lost, but it's what we've been saying for months and years in *Pints of View* – we can't expect publicans to persevere with selling live cask ale if not enough people drink it. And drinkers will walk away if it is not kept in good condition. Chicken and egg. If we want to see a future for cask ale we need to turn the tide and get people back to the pub. If you agree, why not invite some friends out for a few pints of cask ale. Pubs need us!

The remaining four pubs selling real ale in Cheshunt and Flamstead End are all run by McMullen, cask ale stalwarts since 1827 and brewers of one of cask ale's great survivors, AK Original Mild, along with Country Best Bitter (brewed since 1964), IPA and regular seasonal beers. The pubs shown above on the WhatsApp image will have one or more of those beers.

And if there's a pub entrepreneur out there with a taste for cask ale, surely Cheshunt might be worth a look at – the town could really do with a real ale lift.

Les Middlewood
South Herts CAMRA

Pints of View 310 Summer 2024 Prize Crossword Competition



ACROSS

- 1 Good value pub to benefit (7)
- 5 Old friend proves to be a draw (9)
- 10 Dark horse? It produces scary thoughts (9)
- 11 Artist's help allowed food outside (7)
- 12 Go in for chips without fish (5)
- 13 They might coat food with money - gosh! (11)
- 14 Flog an unusual drink container (6)
- 15 Sets diced, possibly, and cut in pieces (9)
- 18 It's a crime for churchman to cancel introduction (5)
- 20 Pub, The Queen, is on target... (5)
- 21 ...another loses out, closing early with unfinished beer (5)
- 22 Like Metro, travelling some distance (9)
- 24 Cut of beef about right for quick movement (6)
- 27 Not watching as oven burnt out (11)
- 29 Do better than argue in certain surroundings (5)
- 31 Drink and crust - a treat for 3? (7)
- 32 Conman is one - unfortunately he can't get off (9)
- 33 Sides expect soup starters in early break (9)
- 34 Where one can practise driving on street is odd (7)

DOWN

- 1 Drink a lot quickly - begin to get sozzled (5)
- 2 Boat race is great for exercising - thanks! (7)
- 3 Time of day for one tan, perhaps (9)
- 4 Bar rebuilt in north east? Yes, at first, not far away (6)
- 5 European vegetable (5)
- 6 I paid stars to cultivate a houseplant (10)
- 7 Expand brew of lager after middle of Lent (7)
- 8 With no help, I'm a cat out playing (9)
- 9 Odds? Yes and no (5)
- 14 Criticism about small bottle (5)
- 15 Fog may be seen dispersing after beginning of day (5)
- 16 One Who opposes beer in Denmark (5)
- 17 Quality of many beers - resent bits floating (10)
- 19 Stick with this mixed lot, please (9)
- 21 It's somehow clear to me I'm behind time (9)
- 23 Produce first inside error (7)
- 25 Number one book served up with feeling (7)
- 26 Stoppage in street not changed (6)
- 27 It comes back in to join free (5)
- 28 In denial, I assume another name (5)
- 30 Pleasant around hot cosy spot (5)

Entries by Fri 2 Aug 2024 to:

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

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

PINTS OF VIEW 309 Spring 2024 Prize Pub Sign Competition

Apologies to those who tried to enter, but were unable to do so due to the competition email address not having been set up!

Competition will be held open until Fri 2 Aug.
See Pints of View 309 page 26 for details.

Branch News

Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA 2024 AGM & Branch Meeting - report

Once again HEB headed off to the top of our domain to hold its AGM at the Belgian Brewer in Bishop's Stortford. The big change this year was the bonus of having the heating on, so it was safe to remove winter coats, and have a cold beer before getting down to business.

The meeting was opened by chair (person) Brendan Sothcott raising a glass to the loss of long-serving CAMRA and committee member Christine Seers. The turn out was a lowly 18, which works out at 2.4% of branch membership. More about stats below.

The branch had a generally successful year with the Gibberd Gardens Beer Festival keeping the branch financially healthy, and the branch also staffing the Epping Ongar Railway Real Ale Weekend.

The committee was up for election with all returned except for the Treasurer who gave up the post due, mainly, to the difficulties of banking. Like many other small organizations and local charities, the big financial houses have taken a dislike to groups of our size. We do not have huge cash mountains, we must have cheques signed by two committee members, and a static local address (rather than a travelling treasurer). Banks are not interested and are making it ever more difficult to operate. It would be interesting to know if CAMRA HQ is looking into this problem. *[Ed: Agreed. Have you asked?]*. With a bit of arm twisting, a new Treasurer stepped forward to be voted in - the one vote against coming from that said person.

Following a welcome beer break it was down to the election, no not a practice for the end-of-year Westminster shuffle, but the *Good Beer Guide 2025*. As usual this involved two lots of voting due to the county-split in our branch, which gobbled-up a fair amount of the evening.

Generally, in the HEB area there are enough candidates for the Hertfordshire half, but we do struggle at times to reach the required number

for Essex *[Ed: How about passing your surplus allocation to a branch with an abundance of good pubs?]*. Harlow is a poor location unless you drink lager. So old favourites are still there, a couple being relegated and a few promoted. It was noted that, once again, CAMRA members are just not putting in beer scores to WhatPub. In fact, one Essex pub had all its scores from CAMRA members outside the HEB area. So at least someone out there cares.

Pub of the Year 2024 - the **Queens Head, Allens Green** came out as both **HEB Herts Area** and **HEB Branch** winner, whilst the **Woodbine Inn, Waltham Abbey** was **HEB Essex Area** winner.

Cider Pub of the Year 2024 - same results as for Pub of the Year!

Club of the Year 2024 - this went to the **Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust**, which always has local ales.

Branch meetings up to June were finalised, where we try to get an even Herts/Essex split.

For general interest, here is the HEB branch 'stats attack': Our local membership peaked just before the COVID fiasco at 856, dropping to 790 for the opening of 2022, last year this slipped to 742, but at the start of this bright new cash-strapped year, it rose like the morning sun to 748. Very encouraging.

The membership breaks down to 78% male and 22% female, with no not-sures. Age wise we have a tiny 5% in the 18 to 30 age group, 26% in the 31 to 50 age group, 49% (no surprise here) in the knowledgeable 51 to 70 age group, with the 71 and over group taking a very respectable 20%. All very interesting!

Norman Samuels

*Publicity & Joint Pubs Officer
Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA*

Want to know what's happening? Follow our Facebook page

 facebook.com/hertssexborderscamra

The page has recently had a revamp. There are now at least a couple of posts a week, all with photos or on a coloured slide, so they look more attractive and stand out better in your feed.

Our posts give details of forthcoming meetings, socials, beer festivals and more. Photos will be posted during or and/after events, so you can see exactly what branch members are getting up to!

Much of the information is currently available in the minutes of the branch meetings, but by following the Facebook page the information will come to you.

Search herts-essex borders camra on Facebook and click 'Follow' to get posts directly to your feed.

Kathryn Flagner

Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA

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Full rate card on page 47

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 47 for contact details).

PUBS IN TOWN

PUB EVENT & BEER GUIDE



PUB FINDER



EVENT GUIDE



BEER ALERTS



ASHWELL: The ***Bushel and Strike*** re-opened in March with Adnams' Southwold Bitter, Timothy Taylor Landlord and one cask guest beer – run by Hertsfields, an events company who also run the ***Fox*** at Pirton.

ASTON: Refurbishment and clearance work is underway to prepare the now community-owned ***Rose and Crown*** and its grounds for opening later in the summer. Updates are being posted on the Aston Parish Council website - <https://astonparishcouncil.chessck.co.uk/RoseCrownLatestNews>.

BALDOCK: The ***George (and Dragon)***, has not reopened since the Covid lockdowns but plans have been submitted to North Herts District Council to reopen with a smaller restaurant with some of the former restaurant area converted into further hotel rooms.

BAYFORD: “The Friends Of The ***Baker Arms***”, a village community group, have announced proposals for a Community Share Offer aiming to raise £200,000 as they plan a way forward to save the pub (owned by McMullen but now closed 12 months) that would lead to community ownership of part of the building and land. To keep up to date with progress and unfolding developments go to <https://www.friendsofbakerarms.org/>

BENINGTON: The longtime closed ***Bell*** remains up for sale.

BOREHAMWOOD: As predicted in our last edition and despite a petition set up by local supporters, Wetherspoon’s ***Hart and Spool*** closed in early March. However, the pub has reopened as the ***Pick and Shovel***. It’s described as a free house and we’ll have more details in the next edition.

THE LORDSHIP ARMS

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The Inn in the Sticks, Benington, Nr Stevenage



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BOURNE END: The **Anchor** is being refurbished - due to re-open early summer.

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

BUNTINGFORD: Now at the **Fox and Duck** in Church Street for 24 years, Free House owners Liza and Julian McKinley have been carrying out full refurbishment and redecoration work at the 550 year old pub to enhance its original features. Open all day there is home cooked food on Thursdays (curry) and Sundays (roasts) and a street food van every Saturday and every other Friday. Live music/karaoke at weekends. And there's a large garden with pods to sit in. Fuller's London Pride plus a guest beer on the handpumps.

CHAPMORE END: The **Woodman** has had redecoration throughout and there are improvements in the restaurant/conservatory area and gardens. The food is now based on Greek and Spanish tapas. Real ales, direct from the cask, are Greene King Abbot and IPA plus a beer from Tring brewery.

CHESHUNT: The **Old English Gentleman** has re-opened but with no real ale. See page 30 *Dry Cheshunt? - a Real Ale alert.*

CHORLEYWOOD: The **Black Horse** in Dog Kennel Lane no longer accepts cash payment - a sign of the times. The town has lost all of its banks.

CODICOTE: The **Globe** reopened in March with Russell and his team at the helm and is open all day with live sport and regular karaoke and bingo events plus live music on the last Friday of the month. On handpump there is McMullen AK Original Mild. Lunchtime and evening meals are planned to be introduced in the near future. At the **Goat**, congratulations to publicans Graham and Brenda Dovey who have now run the pub for the last 30 years. It's the current North Herts CAMRA Community Pub of the Year. The annual "Goatfest" is held here and the pub has also raised considerable amounts for local charities over the years.

COLEMAN GREEN: The **John Bunyan** has a beer festival on Saturday to Sunday, 21 to 22 September. Opening times Saturday 11.30am to 11.30pm; Sunday 12 noon to 7pm.

THE HERTFORD CLUB

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EASTWICK: The **Lion** remains closed with McMullen seeking new leaseholders. Mac's have indicated that they have long-term plans to renovate and redecorate the internals of the pub.

GOSMORE: The **Bull** is still closed and is offered up for freehold sale or leasehold.

GREAT HORMEAD: The **Three Tuns** remains closed. The leasehold is available.

HERTFORD: Plans are afoot to re-enliven the micro-brewery at the **Old Cross Tavern** in St Andrew Street. More information to come as things develop. Hertford brewer, McMullen, have been busy on the acquisition trail in London, purchasing the famous and eclectic **Lock Tavern** at Camden which will trade as present and the **Duke of York** in Rathbone Place, Fitzrovia. Mac's are also going through planning on what they are hoping will become the **Duchess and The Dressmaker**, a former Prezzo restaurant in Brentwood.

HERTFORD HEATH: Greene King are advertising the lease at the **Silver Fox** which remains open offering Greene King IPA on handpump.

HITCHIN: Plans to build a Sainsbury Local store

in the car park of the **Anchor** in Walsworth have been approved by the local council despite local opposition. The pub will remain open and a number of changes to the garden area are included within the plans.

HODDESDON: The **King William IV**, tucked away in Lord Street, remains closed with its lease advertised.

HOOKS CROSS: The **Three Horseshoes** re-opened in March after a substantial refurbishment by McMullen - both inside and out. Mac's cask ales are at the bar and there is a brand new menu. Impressive work to the gardens will make the pub popular this summer. Families might enjoy spotting the terrapins in the pub pond!

ICKLEFORD: The **Cricketers** stays up for sale with an asking price of £700,000.

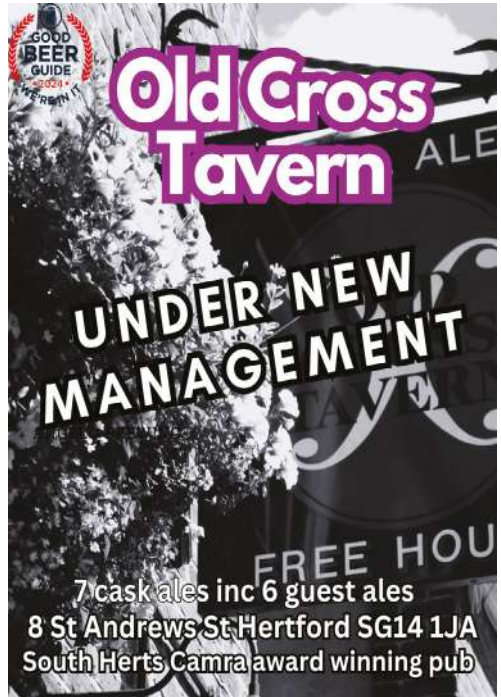
KIMPTON: Villagers and friends of the **White Horse** continue to look for ways to reopen the pub which was sold to a developer by McMullen many years ago and has remained closed ever since. The 'Save Our White Horse' group have been running a series of successful monthly pop-up pub events in the nearby Dacre Rooms featuring cask ale and music. More info at: <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurWhiteHorse>

LEY GREEN: Good news at the **Plough**. Admiral Taverns have withdrawn their pub-to-residential planning application and sold the pub to the local community. To keep up to date with progress go to Facebook "Save The Plough @ Kings Walden". More details in the next edition.

MAPLE CROSS: Brewing capacity at **Creative Juices Brewing Company** has increased by 4,000 litres since the installation of two new 2,000 litre fermenters.

MILL GREEN: Hatfield House Estates have informed *Pints of View* that the long-awaited internal re-fit at the **Green Man** by new incoming operators is due to commence early this summer leading to a re-opening in the ensuing months - now eagerly awaited by local people.

MUCH HADHAM: A change of leaseholder at the **Bull** was anticipated at the end of May. Punch proposals for the pub, including a smaller garden and car park and the construction of bungalows on the field at the rear, have received planning approval. Trade at the pub is likely to be affected by the works - the **Bull** is the only



remaining pub in the village of over 2,000 souls and which, at over a mile in length, purports to have one of the longest village main streets in England. No details of a works programme at the present time.

POTTERS BAR: Closed since December 2019, planning has been approved to convert the **Chequers** and its grounds into flats and housing. The **Cask & Stillage** is hosting Potters Bar Beer & Music Festival for the first time on Sat 20th July. See ad on page 43 for details.

RABLEY HEATH: A sign outside the **Robin Hood & Little John** says "Freehouse Under New Ownership - looking forward to seeing you for a pint soon!". We understand that a local family has bought the pub from Mac's and hope to have more details in the next issue.

RADLETT: The **Cat and Fiddle**, closed since 2019 and a forlorn site on Watling Street, sadly has no future - it is to be converted into housing

REDBOURN: **Farr Brewery** (currently based at Samuels Farm in Wheathampstead) are aiming to move their brewing operation to Great Revel End Farm in Gaddesden Lane, Redbourn - their present site is to be developed. An amended

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GOOD BEER GUIDE
2024
WE'RE IN IT

planning application for the conversion of an existing barn to house the brewery has been submitted to St Albans City Council and awaits a decision. In the meantime, Farr continues to brew in Samuels Farm, providing beers to the company's six pubs.

ST ALBANS: The *Rose and Crown* in St Michael's remains closed. A decision is awaited on the recent planning application which will include for the re-opening of the pub. The *Peacock* in Hatfield Road has reopened but without any real ale. At the *Great Northern*, in London Road, the marquee has been replaced with a semi-permanent pergola/arbor. The *Peahen* in London Road has been refurbished by McMullen and is now open. We welcome new landlady Lisa to the *Rats Castle* in Hatfield Road and have been told that a reintroduction of cask beer is planned.

ST PAUL'S WALDEN: The *Strathmore Arms* has a beer festival running from Thursday (evening) to Sunday, 20 – 23 June. Check pub website for exact festival opening times.

STEVENAGE: The *Marquis of Granby* in North Road reopened in March after refurbishment.

With garden improvements, it is open all day with lunchtime and evening menus. Handpumped beers to date have included those from Tring brewery and Greene King. The lease for the *Marquis of Lorne*, High Street, is still on offer. At the *Broken Seal / Six Hills Brewing*, 29b High Street, Paul Clinton is stepping back from day-to-day running of the business but remains co-owner and director. The tap room is now managed full-time by Noora, an existing member of staff, who is also taking over brewing duties. The *Chequers Beerhouse* in High Street is trialing a food service with a pizza van in the car park on a semi-permanent basis, with food being served on weekday evenings and Saturday afternoons. This may become permanent if it proves successful. The *Roaring Meg Harvester*, located on the Roaring Meg retail park, closed in late March with an expectation that it will be converted to a Miller and Carter steakhouse.

TEWIN: After a period of closure, Greene King pub, the *Rose & Crown* has now reopened.

WALKERN: The *Yew Tree* has been closed for many months but McMullen's continue to seek the right tenants with a view to a future re-opening.

WARE: Refurbishment and redecoration work has been ongoing at the *Rose and Crown* in Watton Road, the garden also receiving a significant makeover. Incoming landlords John and Kelly Migan (who also run the *Brewery Tap* in Ware High Street and the *Oak* in Stanstead Abbots) have Mac's cask ales at the bar. The *Hopbox* in Amwell End which specialises in craft keg beers is selling cooled traditional real cider.

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

WATFORD: Watford and District Branch would like to welcome head brewer Andrew Caird of *Hardline Brewery*, the town's latest ale producer. Look out for Hardline beers in local pubs and an article in the next edition of *Pints of View*. In the meantime, Hardline's website can be found at <https://hardlinebrewery.com>. The *Estcourt Arms* is on a list of 62 pubs nationally that are due to be reopened by Heineken – no timescale currently given

WELWYN GARDEN CITY: The *Chieftain* has been undergoing refurbishment by McMullen and was due to re-open in mid-May, as we were going to press.

Regional CAMRA Festivals

Hitchin Beer Festival celebrates its 50th!

This year's **Hitchin Beer Festival** was the 50th in a continuous run of one or more a year since 1991. All have been hosted (solely or jointly) by **CAMRA North Herts**.

When we decided to do the first of those, we looked around the towns in our area and found the **Plinston Hall, Letchworth** to be the best 'fit'. The **North Hertfordshire Beer Festival** opened Friday 15 November for two days, selling 40 beers from 30 breweries, plus ciders & perries from 9 makers. Look at this year's range and see how we've grown!

Immediately prior to that 1991 event, ITV local news did a feature on our Beer Festival being in a former Temperance Town, so we filled the hall and had a queue down the street. Success beyond expectation. The 1992 to 1994 Festivals were held in September, again at the Plinston Hall; from 1993 we added a range of Belgian bottled beers and this has evolved to become our International Bar.

For 1995, we felt that we could use a bigger venue, so moved the Festival to **Hitchin Town Hall**. Whereas previously we had been restricted to separate lunchtime and evening opening, we were now able to use the new "all-day-opening" concept on Friday & Saturday, and added a Thursday evening session. That event ran from 16 to 18 November. As a not-for-profit



organisation, we were given a preferential rate for renting the Town Hall, however, when, the following year, we were told that a commercial rent would be charged, we returned to the Plinston Hall. A beer festival ran there every September from 1996 until 2011.

The 1999 event was renamed as **Letchworth Beer Festival** because, for 2000, we had

established a partnership with **Hitchin Round Table**, and used their charitable status to get an economic rental rate for Hitchin Town Hall, once again. Hence, our second Beer Festival in Hitchin was a joint event open all day on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 March. On this basis, from 2000 to 2011 we were holding both a joint 2-day March (May in 2002) Festival at Hitchin Town Hall and our own 3-day September Festival at the Plinston Hall. Originally, we had adopted representations of the **Hertfordshire Hart** for Festival logos, but in 2006 the logo for Letchworth changed to the iconic **Black Squirrel**, accompanied by the slogan "Nuts About Beer". In 2008, the Hitchin logo became the Town Hall itself.

Unfortunately, the Plinston Hall closed in early 2012 and so a new venue was needed for that year's Autumn event. What we found was very different! We set up in the **Green House Community Market** (just off the Wynd) in Letchworth, with bars distributed among the trading units. The only serious problem was due to the semi-open facility being unheated in a rather cold late September. It was an interesting experience, but not to be repeated!

Our next problem was the closure of Hitchin Town Hall, prior to the drawn-out process of its conversion to a museum. We were, therefore without a venue for 2013 until



Hitchin Rugby Club stepped in with the offer of providing tented accommodation, on the basis that they would join the existing CAMRA North Herts and Round Table partnership. The marquee was erected, the 2013 Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival ran from Thursday 6 to Saturday 8 June and, thanks to the Rugby Club's involvement (nickname "The Hedgehogs") the Festival had a new logo.

Joint Festivals were also held in June 2014 and 2015. As CAMRA North Herts, we still wanted to do an additional event of our own, so from Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 February 2016 we hosted a **Winter Beer Festival** in **Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre**. No Indoor Bowls that week, because we were on temporary flooring over the rinks. From 2016 to 2018,

annual events took place twice a year – February in Stevenage and June in Hitchin. In 2019, however, due to having no volunteer to organise our Stevenage Festival, only the joint one in Hitchin went ahead.

The lack of a Stevenage Beer Festival in 2019 encouraged new volunteers to assist in setting one up for February 2020 – our last for 18 months due to COVID striking soon afterwards. We returned to Hitchin Rugby Club in September 2021 to hold a 'COVID-modified' ticket-only event, with restricted customer numbers and safer bar service and seating arrangements. It was a successful Festival, just a bit smaller than usual. Come 2022, we were excited to be running "normal" Beer Festivals again.

Our June event at the Rugby Club would be the last one in which Hitchin Round Table participated, due to declining membership, making our June 2023 Festival the first involving only CAMRA North Herts and Hitchin Rugby Club.

So (if you've been counting the above) prior to this year's event, we've held 21 Beer Festivals in Letchworth, 4 in Stevenage and 24 in Hitchin. Hence the 2024 Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival was both the 25th in Hitchin and the 50th overall. Both Silver and Golden Anniversaries to celebrate!

Paul Coard

Ex Chair

CAMRA North Herts

Ale saints raise money for All Saints, again

It's now three years since the team at All Saints Church launched the Kings Langley Beer & Fizz Festival. The first year was very much a case of testing the water, and the organisers were bowled over by its success. The community really got behind the festival, as did real ale enthusiasts from the wider area, raising vital funds for important local charities.

2023 saw the same people - and more - flock in, and Father James McDonald and his fundraising team are praying 2024 is no different. As well as 20 carefully curated Real and Craft Ales on offer, plus various Champagnes and Proseccos, there will also be a series of sumptuous hot-food stands on hand, as well as family entertainment on the final day.

The Kings Langley Beer & Fizz Festival is running from 13-15th September at All Saints Church, WD4 8JS. www.klbeerandfizz.co.uk

Sarah Wragg

All Saints Church, Kings Langley



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Regional CAMRA Festivals

As reported in the last edition of Pints of View there is no **Great British Beer Festival** in London this year due to the venue being unavailable on the dates required. Organisers and volunteers are now exploring a variety of options to ensure the festival will return in 2025.

If you are looking for an alternative 'Beer Festival fix' please see the list of forthcoming Hertfordshire and Regional CAMRA Festivals below:

JUNE/JULY 2024

Gibberd Garden Beer Festival (CAMRA bar at non-CAMRA festival)

Sat 15 - Sun 16 June
Gibberd Garden, Marsh Lane, Harlow, Essex

Maidenhead Beer & Cider Festival

Fri 5 - Sat 6 July
Sports Bar, Summerleaze Park, Off Summerleaze Road, Maidenhead, Berks.

Ealing Beer Festival

(London's biggest beer festival in 2024)
Wed 10 - Sat 13 July
Walpole Park, Ealing, London

Chelmsford Summer Beer & Cider Festival

Tue 16 - Sat 20 July
Admirals Park, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, Essex

Hemel Old Town Beer Festival

Fri 19 - Sun 21 July
St Mary's Church, old Town, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

Epping Ongar Railway Real Ale Festival

Fri 26 - Sun 28 July
Ongar Station, Ongar, Essex

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024

Peterborough Beer Festival

Tue 20 - Sat 24 August
The Embankment, Embankment Road, Peterborough, Cambs.

Clacton Real Ale and Cider Festival

Wed 21 - Sat 24 August
St James' Hall, Tower Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex

East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 21 - Mon 26 August

St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Watford Beer Festival

Thu 22 - Sat 24 August
Halsey Hall, Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Herts.

TBC Chappel Summer Beer Festival

Tue 3 - Sat 7 September
East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel and Wakes Colne Station, Wakes Colne, Essex

St Albans Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 25 - Sat 28 September
Alban Arena, St. Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts.

Festivals & Branch Events

CAMRA runs 180+ beer festivals each year, plus many more branch events, so there's something for everyone!

Go to: <https://events.camra.org.uk/>

Back then, in 2023...



St Albans Beer & Cider Festival

Herts CAMRA Contacts

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HERTS & ESSEX BORDERS CAMRA

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Paul Donatantonio
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Herts CAMRA Diary

The listings below are colour-coded **North Herts**, **South Herts**, **Herts & Essex Borders** and **Watford & District**. A coloured background denotes a Social Event. All CAMRA Members are welcome to attend all CAMRA Branch and Social Events. Please visit the Herts Branch Websites for up-to-date information. Addresses can be found on page 47.

JUNE

Sat 15: SH Ale Trail - Harpenden

1pm. Meet at **Harpenden Arms**, 188 High Street, AL5 2TR

Sat 15 - Sun 16: HEB Gibberd Garden Beer Festival - Harlow

(CAMRA Bar in a non-CAMRA festival) Gibberd Garden, Marsh Lane, Harlow, Essex.

Wed 19: SH Social - Wildhill

5pm. **Woodman Wildhill, AL9 6EA**. Includes South Herts Pub of the Year (Bronze Award) presentation.

Sat 22: NH Countryside Summer Outing 1

Starting around 12 noon via Herts Lynx to several village & small town pubs. Itinerary will be advised once the timetable is published. Please register interest via chair@northherts.camra.org.uk

Mon 24: W&D Branch Meeting - Watford

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

Fri 28: W&D Social - Chorleywood and Heronsgate

8.30pm. **Rose & Crown**, Old Common Road, WD3 5LV, then 9pm **Old Shepherd**, Chorleywood Bottom, WD3 5JH, (both Chorleywood) finishing 10pm **Land of Liberty, Peace & Plenty**, Long Lane, Heronsgate, WD3 5BS.

Sat 29: SH & HEB New River Line Trail Social - Broxbourne to Hertford

12 Noon. Meet at the **Crown**, Old Nazeing Road, Broxbourne. Take the train! Calling at pubs close to the five stations along the line, leading to Hertford. See article on page 20.

Sat 29: NH Cambridge Beer Quarter visit with East Beds Branch - Cambridge

Starting around 11am from Hitchin Station to take in up to 6 pubs and a brewery. Itinerary will be advised once timetable published. Please register interest via chair@northherts.camra.

[org.uk](https://northherts.camra.org.uk) or [check our website](#) closer to the date <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>

JULY

Mon 8: HEB Branch Meeting - Loughton

8.30pm. **Victoria Tavern**, Smarts Lane, Loughton

Wed 10: NH Branch Trip to Ealing Beer Festival

There's no Great British Beer Festival this summer, so instead we'll head to the 33rd Ealing event in Walpole Park. This is the largest outdoor London CAMRA beer festival, featuring over 330 cask ales, ciders, perries, craft keg, wines and world beers. Admission tickets are available on the door and advance tickets are available online, offering the benefit of guaranteed entry in a priority queue at no extra charge. Go to <https://ebf.camra.org.uk/tickets/> We'll publish train times closer to the date on our website: <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>

Sat 13: W&D Summer in Sarratt Social - Sarratt and Belsize

1pm. **Cricketers**, The Green, Sarratt, WD3 6AS, then 2pm **Boot**, The Green, Sarratt, WD3 6BL, finishing at 3pm **Plough**, Dunny Lane, Belsize, WD3 4NP.

Sat 13: NH 50th Anniversary Celebration - Old Stevenage

Celebrating 50 years since the formation of CAMRA North Herts

3pm. We'll begin in the **Red Lion**, High Street, where it all started, before taking a wander around the Old Town's Real Ale pubs for the rest of the afternoon and early evening. Join us and raise a few glasses to our longevity.

Fri 19: SH Ale Trail - Hemel Hempstead ending at Hemel Old Town Beer Festival

6pm. Meet at **Full House**, 128 Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1EZ

Sat 20: SH Branch Meeting & Special General Meeting followed by Ale Trail - Hertford

1pm. **The Hertford Club**, Bull Plain, Hertford.

Includes South Herts Club of the Year (Silver Award) presentation. A Hertford Ale Trail will follow the meeting.

Sun 21: SH Ale Trail – Potters Bar ending at **Cask & Stillage (Beer Festival previous day)**
12 noon. Meet at **Admiral Byng**, 186-192 Darkes Lane, EN6 1AF

Fri 26 – Sun 28: HEB Epping & Ongar Railway Real Ale Festival
Epping Ongar Railway, Ongar Station, Ongar.

Sat 27: SH Ale Trail - St Albans City 1
1pm. Meet at **Robin Hood**, 126 Victoria Street, AL1 3TG

Mon 29: W&D Branch Meeting - Watford
8pm. **Essex Arms**, Langley Way, Watford, WD17 3EG.

Wed 31: NH Branch Meeting - TBA
8pm. Venue to be advised via <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>

AUGUST

Mon 12: HEB Branch Meeting – High Wych
8.30pm. **Rising Sun**, High Wych.

Mon 12: W&D Branch Meeting – Watford
8pm. **West Herts Sports Club**, 8 Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP.

Wed 14: SH Committee Meeting – St Albans
7.45pm. **Six Bells**, St Michael's, St Albans.

Sat 17: NH Countryside Summer Outing 2
Starting around 12 noon via Herts Lynx to several village & small town pubs. The itinerary will be advised once the timetable is published. Please register interest via chair@northherts.camra.org.uk

Wed 21: NH Branch Trip to the 45th Peterborough Beer Festival
For more information, go to <https://pborobeerfest.camra.org.uk/details> We'll publish suggested train times closer to the date on our website: <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>

Thu 22 – Sat 24: W&D Watford Beer Festival Halsey Masonic Hall, Rickmansworth Road, Watford. WD18 OJE.

Sat 24: SH Ale Trail - Watford ending at **Watford Beer Festival**
1pm. Meet at **Wellington Arms**, 2, Woodford Road, WD17 1PA

Wed 28: NH Social – Baldock

8pm. The **Old White Horse**, Station Road, followed by the **Cock**, High Street, the **White Lion**, High Street and the **Orange Tree**, Norton Road. (Check itinerary closer to the date at <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>)

Sat 31: SH Ale Trail - Hatfield ending at **3 Brewers of St Albans** brewery Summer Party
1pm. Meet at **Red Lion**, 88 Great North Road, AL9 5EU

SEPTEMBER

Tue 3 - Sat 7: HEB Chappel Summer Beer Festival
East Anglian Railway Museum, Station Road, Wales Colne, Nr Colchester.

Sat 7: SH Luton Ale Trail
1pm. Meet at **Great Northern**, 63 Bute St, LU12EY

Wed 11: HEB Branch Meeting – Roydon
8.30pm. **New Inn**, Roydon.

Wed 11: SH Branch Meeting – Redbourn
8pm. **Cricketers**, East Common, Redbourn – TBC.

Sat 14: SH Ale Trail - St Albans City 2
1pm. Meet at **Mermaid**, 98 Hatfield Road, 126 Victoria Street, AL1 3RL

Wed 11: NH Social - Hitchin
8pm. The **Radcliffe Arms**, Walsworth Road, followed by the **Victoria**, Ickleford Road, the **Bricklayers Arms**, Queen Street and the **Half Moon**, Queen Street. (Check itinerary closer to the date at <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>)

Wed 25 – Sat 28: SH St Albans Beer and Cider Festival
Alban Arena, St.Peter's Street, St Albans.

Thu 26: W&D Social at St Albans Beer and Cider Festival
6pm. **Alban Arena**, St.Peter's Street, St Albans, AL1 3LD.
Meet at the Products Stand at 6pm and every hour thereafter.

Wed 25: NH Branch Meeting
8pm. Venue to be advised to members and via <https://northherts.camra.org.uk/branch-diary/>

Mon 30: W&D Branch Meeting – Watford
8pm. **Essex Arms**, Langley Way, Watford, WD17 3EG.

OCTOBER

Wed 16: SH Branch Meeting – London Colney
8pm. **Bull**, London Colney – TBC.

Roger... and out

Beers from The Black Stuff

There's dark at the end of the tunnel. It seemed the age of pale beers, with India Pale Ale in the ascendancy, would never face a challenge.

But, recently, there's been a remarkable sea change in drinkers' habits. In 2022 Guinness reported that sales of its stout had increased by 30 per cent and one in 10 pints of beer poured in London pubs was the Irish black stuff.

The news came on the back of Guinness's owner, Diageo, investing £73 million in a new visitor centre and micro-brewery in Covent Garden. And then came the *real* shock announcement: Guinness had overtaken Carling to become the biggest-selling brand in Britain.

Before readers start sharpening their quills, I understand that Guinness, which makes neither cask nor bottle-conditioned versions of its stout, is not everyone's favourite. But it's not alone in enjoying a surge in popularity for its beer.

In Scotland, BrewDog, never one to miss a passing bandwagon, launched Black Heart, in can and keg. Closer to home, there are a number of porters and stouts available in cask form. **Anspach & Hobday** produces several versions of porter that together are its best-selling beers. **The Porter (6.7% ABV)** is the cask version and it can be sampled at the Arch House taproom, 118 Druid Street, London SE1.

A quick bit of history: early in the 18th century, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, with London's population growing at a fast pace, there was a craze for a new stronger version of existing dark brown beers. It acquired the nickname of Porter due to its popularity with porters working in the docks and markets of the capital. The strongest version was called Stout Porter, later shortened to just Stout.

Large amounts of the beer were exported to Ireland, and brewers there, with Arthur Guinness leading the pack in Dublin, switched to porter.



It's thought the first versions of porter were brewed in East London. The location is celebrated by the **Five Points Brewery** in Hackney, London E8 with its cask **Railway Porter (4.8% ABV)** that can be enjoyed in both its taproom at 61 Mare Street and at its flagship pub, the Pembury Tavern, 90 Amhurst Road; close to both Hackney Central and Hackney Downs stations.

Out in the Shires, Wells & Co's new **Brewpoint** plant in Bedford has added a **Genesis Stout (4.1% ABV)** that chief executive Peter Wells says is flying off the bar. That's a keg beer, but **Tring Brewery's Tea Kettle Stout (4.7% ABV)** comes in cask and the company says it's pleased with the increase in sales.

An interesting insight into the revival of stout comes from George Arkell, a director of the family-owned Arkell's Brewery in Swindon, founded in 1843. He says that, while the brewery doesn't make its own stout, there's been a big increase in Guinness sales across its 100 pubs, with younger drinkers moving from lager to the black stuff.

He thinks the trend is the result of Covid and lockdown: when pubs reopened, young people were looking for beer with rather more flavour than the insipid liquid that passes for lager in this country.

The new Guinness visitor centre in London is due to open this autumn. The main brands will continue to be brewed in Dublin, but the Covent Garden site will produce beers for the domestic market.

It will be an opportunity to campaign for the beer giant to produce beers that are alive and kicking in the cask!

Roger Protz

*British Guild of Beer Writers
South Herts CAMRA*

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