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the tippler

Summer 2025

Inside:

50 Not Out:

Glos CAMRA

The Hunter on Tour:

CAMRA AGM



The Magazine of the Gloucestershire Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale

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the tippler

The Magazine of the Gloucestershire Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale.

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FRONT COVER: *The surprising taproom at Clavell & Hind, Knightsbridge, Cheltenham – plenty of room both inside and out to taste their wide range of beers.*

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Got something to say?



Then please get in touch! We value feedback and news from around the county, so, if want to make a contribution, compliment or criticise, contact:

The Editor, The Tippler, 23 Theocs Close, Tewkesbury. GL20 5TX
chris@thetippler.co.uk 07977 157050

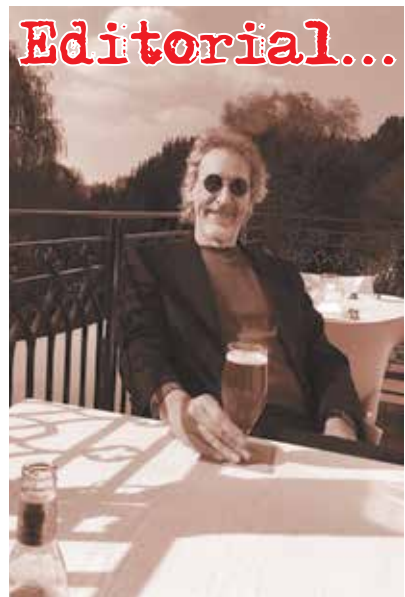
NEW! CONTRIBUTION DEADLINES

For the next two issues, the deadlines will now be the
FIRST Friday in August and November 2025



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Some of us old codgers are still happy to use the services of the Royal Mail, and we actively encourage all forms of (preferably printable!) communication. So get writing letters, sending emails and get your news, views and comments published!



Well, here's the summer Tippler, as always, packed full of interesting articles, features, news and competitions. We have now hit a record 84 pages, and to be honest, we could have made it 96!

Coming soon are all the beer festivals over the warm months and I would encourage you all to try and get along to on. There are some standouts, of course, notably Postlip Hall, always worth a visit.

You'll all have noticed that we now have four regular competitions to choose from all with great prizes, so get the entries sent in and see if you're a lucky winner.

All our regular features are here, along with some new contributors. Letter writers have become a big part of the magazine and it is great to see the engagement of the readers and drinkers, all over the county and beyond. Some articles are a bit of a divergence from just beer and cider, but are still part of the fabric of this great county of ours.

There are many things I could mention about the pub and beer scene and its problems, but the most important antidote to all of those is to get out and visit your local pubs, clubs and taprooms and give the brilliant breweries and hostellers all the support we can.

Cheers!

Chris Leibbrandt

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DOG FRIENDLY

Letters to the Editor...

Chris,

Bemused to see your 'Scraping the Barrel' article your 'The Tippler' rag in a local pub in Cheltenham today.

Rest assured I will be informing the many establishments in your magazine - particularly my favourite pubs in Tewkesbury - of your hatred of centre-right politics. I'm sure the folks behind the Cross Hands particularly will be interested in your article.

I have also registered (which you may check) <http://thetippler.uk> (and may splash out on the other ones) on which I will publish some rebuttals to your left wing diatribe.

In a nutshell, well done, you've earned it.

Dave Thompson

Chris replies,

Many thanks for the email Dave, I'm delighted that you are not only reading, but also taking such an interest in the magazine.

I'm delighted to get your feedback on the contents. I am always very happy to get varied and interesting articles with differing viewpoints, so why not write in and we can look at getting your contributions published?

I look forward to hearing from you and maybe, you never know, we'll meet up in one of the excellent pubs in Tewkesbury.

Dear Chris,

I'm a CAMRA branch member of Croydon & Sutton and found myself in Stroud this week, where I found a copy of your excellent Tippler magazine.

It led me to visit a few of your great venues in Dursley which I otherwise wouldn't have known about, so thank you kindly and keep up the good work.

Steve

Chris replies,

Many thanks for the email Steve, I'm delighted on two fronts, firstly, that you liked the magazine, and secondly, but more importantly, it got you out to Dursley to visit pubs in this fabulous county. All in all, the magazine is working!

Hi Chris

I managed to find the new Tippler at the Sandford Park Alehouse.

Good luck with improving the ranking of the Tippler... the only way is up I guess. Though I agree that some of the winners are poor in my view.

I do like Pints West, and especially like their more thorough review of breweries compared to ours, (better this month), but I imagine its tough getting contributors.

It must be harsh reading that there are typos! Surely not?

Cheers,

Russell Murfitt

Chris replies,

Many thanks for the email Russell, I appreciate your comments.

You never know if we'll move up the rankings, apparently we don't do enough campaigning, the set of criteria for judging doesn't actually take much notice of entertainment, whether or not the magazine is a paper magazine to be read in pubs. Whether or not there is any engagement with the audience, as we do all of those things with a full set of letters pages, and at least four competitions in each magazine with significant prizes, we're kind of shooting at the wrong targets. No matter, we'll keep

Letters to the Editor...

going. What is gratifying is winning the Tippler Editors award every issue!

I'll keep an eye on the typos, but as someone who has been around magazine production for over four decades, I'm not holding my breath!

Hi Chris

I am writing in to enter the 'Name That Pub' competition, the answer is, of course, the Turks Head in Gloucester.

I have also attached a photograph of a similar list of rules/behaviours from the Bag O'Nails pub in Bristol.

I would, however, advise a deal of caution with printing rule #1 which is fairly emphatic and not really for publication in a family magazine like yours!

Regards,

Steve Laver

Chris replies,

Many thanks for the email Steve, I'm pleased to tell you that your competition entry is correct, so I'll put that into the draw for the winning tickets.

I am also indebted to you for the photo of the 'behaviours' board, and as you say it's pretty demanding.

I have taken your advice on rule #1 and readers can make their own mind up on what it proscribed. As for the others, there are a few that I'd have to take issue with.

Rule #4 is one that would ensure I wouldn't gain access to the pub. I always thought his big hit 'Ring of Fire' was a commentary on the consequences of overindulgence in a industrial strength curry. I was also slightly worried about the wisdom of performing this ditty at one of the USA's toughest state penitentiaries.

FLAGONS
DOWN, YOU TIPPLER
SCOUNDRELS, AND OUT
WITH THE QUILLS



I wonder what happened to rules #9 - 18? Rule #19 is certainly one I have to contend. In my view, the best technical rock drummer is Brian Downey late of Thin Lizzy, the best left-hander, Ian Paice from Deep Purple and the best rock drummer by a country mile, was the Batham's swilling 'Hammer of God' John Bonham from Led Zeppelin.

So what's all this got to do with beer? Well it's the kind of eclectic and fascinating discourse that you'd expect to hear in any busy pub on a Friday night, and long may it remain so.

Letters to the Editor...

Sir,

As on the occasion of my previous correspondence I was in the dubious company of your esteemed walking expert in the splendid surroundings of the 'Standing Order' Wetherspoon establishment in Derby city centre.

My attention was drawn (by a blushing lady member of the group) to the portrait shown and I was disturbed, as was she, at the ill thought out regalia of the Viceroy of India (1899 - 1905) and, in particular, placement of official dangly bits. Thank goodness we no longer have to put up with this sort of beastliness!

Percival Everard D'estrian
Maj Gen, (Ret'd.)



Chris replies,

Many thanks for the email calling into question the suitability of the official regalia of office, and in particular the use of dangly bits, It all looks a little bit sad and in actual fact, seriously questionable to me.

Thank goodness our very own Gloucestershire Wetherspoons show more discretion.

Dear Chris,

Whiling away the time with a pint or two, the 'Hunter's' column is always a good place to start, indeed the spring issue caught my attention, more than usual.

This was 'Tales of the Riverbank (Avon)' starting at the Fleet Inn at Twynning. My earliest memories of it were in the late 1980's when my boss introduced me to the 'delightful' landlord. Known as 'Pete the Fleet', he was old school and was surly and rude and thoroughly unhelpful if you asked for anything like a lager for your girlfriend. He was the entertainment for the locals especially if any new people dropped by to watch his reaction. His Whitbread Pale Ale was kept exceptionally well, however.

We used the skittle alley for functions although only in warmer weather as it was cold and damp, as was the outside loo! Sometime in the 1990's it got a complete makeover, dragging the Fleet into the 20th century, the gents outside loo being brought inside and the skittle alley converted into chalets for weekend stays. The new progressive looking couple from the midlands who ran the pub made it quite a place to enjoy the river.

Meanwhile, upriver at Bredon, I too remember the goings on at the Fox and Hounds. Mike Hardwicke was another klandlord of (ahem) individual character, "imbiber extraordinaire" a very good description. Often after a tiff with his talented chef, Mike James, he found himself chefless, however Mike the chef returned time after time after trade had dipped along with the cuisine. I eventually lost track of Mike after he ran a restaurant in Tewkesbury, what I do know is that he doesn't quite have that head of hair now...that's Rock n, Roll I guess.

Graham 'Robo' Robinson

Letters to the Editor...

Chris replies,

Many thanks for the (old school) letter a treat getting that in the post.

Thanks also for the memories of bygone days by the river, things have moved on and thank goodness, there are far fewer troublesome hosts. Grumpy landlords running pubs, whatever next?

Hello Chris,

I have just read letter from Andy Shaw in the latest Tippler and am frankly astounded that anyone from a national organisation would address a volunteer in such a way.

I, and some of my real ale friends, pick up other area's CAMRA magazines and feel that the Tippler is as good as any that we have seen and better than many.

I too would be interested to see examples of the apparently better publications, but perhaps a simpler idea would be for this National Magazine Support Coordinator to take over as editor for an issue and then we could all see how it should really be done.

Perhaps instead of judging those areas who work to produce their own free publications (and thus publicise CAMRA) it might be better if CAMRA addressed those that do not.

Martin Broadribb

Chris replies,

Hello Martin, thanks for writing in and leaping to our aid on this. To be fair to the team and in particular, the judges, it is a failing of mine that I have not studied the list of criteria to judge magazines. After 12 years of doing the job, I had thought I had a good 'handle' of what is a good magazine or not. That, and 40+ years of writing features, designing and editing several magazines including an international trade magazine I gambled I could use that experience to create a magazine for the county's drinkers.

FLAGONS
DOWN, YOU TIPPLER
SCOUNDRELS, AND OUT
WITH THE QUILLS



As far I can make out, the judging criteria seem to have no relation to ink on paper publication like the Tippler. Designed to be read in pubs, not on a laptop, I regularly get entries from readers and their friends who are sitting in pubs completing the competitions, proof positive that it works. There also seems little or no interest in the entertainment value or audience engagement. As an example, look at the letters page in here! That being the case, they are judging on what is strictly listed and because of my failure to adhere to the judging criteria, we (the magazine) deserve to be last.

Cheers!

Chris Leibbrandt

NEW FOR 2025

PRIZE LETTER

Gloucester Brewery are now the sponsors of the new Tippler Tee-Shirt prize letter where you can win one of our coveted Tippler Tee Shirts.



GLOUCESTER BREWERY

Send your letters, along with your Tee-shirt size, by either email, or by old-school post, to the Editor at:
The Tippler, 23 Theocs Close,
Tewkesbury GL20 5TX

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THE HUNTER'S COLUMN



Our intrepid hero heads south to the iconic CAMRA Annual General Meeting, and asked the big existentialist question of Why AGM? To be sung to the tune of the well-known song by the Village People.

OK, so hands up all of you who have been to a CAMRA AGM. Hmm, more than I thought, but less than it ought.

It had been a few years since I last attended, but I still have my lanyard (ahoy there sailor!) and the free, beige coloured, canvas shoulder bag that contained all the necessary, and less necessary, information. The lanyard makes you feel important and helps you remember your name after you have sunk a few pints at the built-in beer festival, an integral part of the event, whilst the shoulder bag, which everyone sports, makes you feel like one of the gang, if a little camp. I only signed up for this year's AGM or Members' Weekend - a



rose (or a dud) by any other name is still a rose (or a dud) - in Torquay after meeting up with the enthusiastic R&B (Redditch & Bromsgrove) CAMRA crew who attended the Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival in February. Rob and Simon from Cirencester CAMRA, whom I had linked up with at previous AGM's, had reservations about Torquay as a venue - *'Uninspiring, too few Good Beer Guide pubs'*.

Undeterred, I went with the R&B vibe, *'There'll be a trip to Newton Abbot Beer Festival'* they enthused, and I thought to myself that with a bit of luck they may be able to pick me up on their way down the M5.

That didn't transpire; the car was full. It then turned out that after I'd booked my hotel for Friday and Saturday, the Newton

Abbot trip was on the Thursday. Added to that Rob and Simon had got it right, there were only two Torquay pubs in the GBG.

Still undeterred and with blind faith (no, not the band) I turned up at the impressively named Riviera International Centre, at four o'clock on the Friday afternoon in order to register my attendance and collect aforesaid goody bag.

I had a few swift halves and duly returned to the parked car, which my other half was driving back to the hotel. She had been so impressed with the hotel that I booked that she decided to come down with a friend, so that they could explore the town and surrounding villages, whilst I sat and drank myself through the AGM.

The bar is closed whilst the business of the day is executed, although open over lunchtime and immediately after the session ends. Miles from home and the first person I bumped into at the bar was 'Ali G' from Cheltenham CAMRA, who must have had a thirst like a lost nomad in a desert who'd been sold a sheet of sandpaper for a map, as he had just returned from a month's vacation in India. Where's 'Jaipur John' when you need him?

The next couple were from Milton Keynes and I have met them regularly over the years volunteering at countless beer fests, including TWAF. CAMRA-rderie abounded and I hadn't even ordered a drink yet.

Here is a quick scan of the pow-wow at Torbay - a bit of business, accounts etc.; a few motions voted on; a welcoming speech from the newly voted-in local M.P.; a rousing speech from the CEO of the British Institute of Innkeeping, who was awarded CAMRA's Campaigner of the Year Award (very in-keeping); an inspiring speech from our new Chair, Ashley Corbett-Collins, the new kid on the block - youthful-looking, slim, quaffed, lightly-bearded, tattoos - not your normal CAMRA image, except for the beard of course.

One of the highlights of the Weekend for me was a plea by a Midlands CAMRA member, who had fallen out with some members of his branch and was subsequently thrown out of CAMRA by the branch on disciplinary grounds. This action was then rubber stamped by the executive. He then had one single arrow left to his bow.

Under CAMRA rules he was allowed to stand in front of conference (the membership) and plead his case face to face and plead it he did. The room listened attentively and came to the joint conclusion that it was a bit of a storm in a beer cup; a clash of personalities and on an overwhelming vote, the gentleman was formally restored to full membership.

Even he said that some people might regard him as having a bit of a 'marmite' personality and that *'half the people in this room may not like me and the other half might not be too keen either'*. Smiles all round or it would have been if the brewery hadn't closed 20 years earlier.

It's all there, comedy and pathos - no, not the Greek Island, but what about the beer? Well, the Siren calls were correct about the scarcity of GBG pubs. On the Friday night we did call into half of them, The Hole In The Wall, an historic, low ceilinged, grade II listed pub with a lively crowd, busy restaurant room and a duo setting up in the corner. It had all

the signs of a successful pub but the next day at the Riviera we were all encouraged to visit the place and drink it dry, as Torquay's oldest pub was closing that weekend after 500 years of service.

Richard Rossendale-Cook, the pub's landlord, said that he was being forced to shut the venue by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, although, he continued, *'I can't see it being shut down, it's too famous - but the brewery will probably find a better way.'* If he had stuck to the smuggling ways of old, he would probably have been alright.

Out of the 52 South West regional ales available at the festival, my 'Top of the Pops' scorecard had in joint first place Driftwood Spars *Blackheads Mild* 3.8%, a "Dark brown mild with aroma of coffee and prunes - *'silky smooth taste of smoky roast malt, raisins and liquorice'* and GT Ales *Pull The Udder One* 4.5%, *'Savour our full-bodied milk stout and enjoy the coffee and chocolate aromas'*.

The name of the Blackheads Mild nearly put me off but as the brewery website explains, *'Named after a local motorbike group who drink in the pub on a very regular basis. They are called the Blackheads due to their crash helmets.'* Bikers' black humour.

If you haven't been before, I encourage you to make the effort, meet up with other fellow CAMRAdees and sign up for next year's knees-up in St Albans, which, incidentally, has nine entries in the current GBG and boasts *'An excellent short pub trail in the shadow of the cathedral.'* What are you waiting for? All together now...

Y - A - G - M,
You gotta know this one thing,
Y - A - G - M



The Hunter



Tewkesbury CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2025 is The Cobblers in Newent

This year's Tewkesbury POTY competition rang the changes from previous years.

Probably like many branches, we've been subject to cries of 'favouritism' over the years and decided to do something about it. So we developed a single page questionnaire (based on the national POTY questionnaire) to give a points score across a number of categories for each pub, and set out round our area pubs to get some scores on the doors.

Several very enjoyable minibus trips later, we were delighted to announce 'The Cobblers' in Newent as this year's winner, much to the surprise of landlord Graham Rushton ('That came out of nowhere!'). Well done Graham, it was well worth the trip!



Tewkesbury Vice Chairman Ben Smith with Graham Rushton

Tribute to Allan Brown

Sadly, we recently lost Allan Brown, a core member of Tewkesbury CAMRA for many years.

Allan was always an active, outdoor sort of chap. In his youth was a keen motorcycle scrambler and cyclist. He cycled around most of Britain and was also into boating, spending many happy hours on local waterways (naturally stopping at riverside pubs along the way).

Allan was an active member of Tewkesbury CAMRA from the mid-nineties onward, helping set-up and take-down at nearly every beer festival. He was always a willing helper and although not keen on being front of house or behind the bar, would toil away happily behind the scenes.

He also helped set up and build the stillage for the Water Festival bar in L&L's cellar. We are still using that stillage today as the bar at the Tewkesbury Winter Ale Festival, such was the quality of his work.

About five years ago he decided to stand back more with set-up, but continued to assist Dave and Geoff putting up the advertising road signs, even if



he did hold the spirit level upside down at times!

He enjoyed participating in our trips, particularly the Black Country ones, and especially if going to the Beacon Hotel for Sarah Hughes' Dark Ruby Mild - which he said could only be improved with a bottle of Gold Label added to the top!

We will all miss him.

Dave Gregory

Tewkesbury Cider Pub of the Year 25 goes to the Cross House Tavern

Cider Pub of the Year has again gone to The Cross House Tavern in Tewkesbury. Well come on folks, who else stocks such a huge range of excellent local ciders and perries?

L to R: John Roberts (Tewkesbury Chairman), Laurence Mills, Stuart Minchew, Martin Raven (Tewkesbury Cider Rep) and Dereck Hartland



Ashton Brewery receive their award

Having won Beer of the Festival at this year's TWF with the excellent 8.2% 'Jaffa Cake', we recently handed over a certificate to Ashton Brewery to mark the achievement at a well attended evening in The Cross House Tavern.



The happy team from Ashton Brewery




wetherspoon

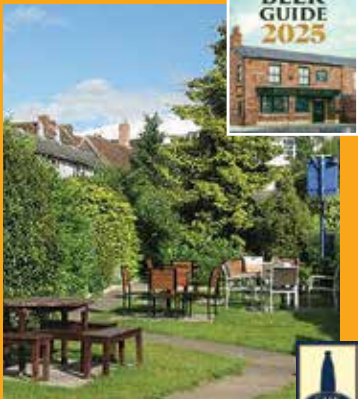
THE ROYAL HOP POLE HOTEL

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Wye Valley Celebrate 40 Years!

Wye Valley Bitter has been a beloved part of the cask range of beautiful beers since 1985.

Now, as the brewery celebrate their 40th anniversary, they've given this outstanding cask-conditioned amber ale a fresh new look and standout new name: **Pyoneer!**

Wye Valley Brewery was founded by Peter Amor at the pub he ran in the Herefordshire village of Canon Pyon. *Pyoneer* is therefore a subtle nod to where it all started.

Managing Director, Vernon Amor, explained: 'We wanted a name that not only honoured our roots, but also looked forward. *Pyoneer* is exactly that - this was the beer that launched Wye Valley Brewery, and it's still as loved as it was 40 years ago. The name references Canon Pyon, where it all began, and the pioneering values that continue to shape our brewery today.'

Abbie Gadd, Head of Sales & Marketing, added: 'The decision to rebrand was driven by evolving tastes and terminology amongst beer drinkers. Terms such as 'bitter' and 'mild' are seen as outdated and off-putting to younger drinkers, which is why we took a bold step in renaming this classic ale. We want more pub-goers to want to try this fantastic beer and not overlook it on the bar. We also want to support pub licensees in offering an excellent session ale'.



wyevalleybrewery.co.uk   

RAISE A GLASS TO 40 YEARS OF BEAUTIFUL BEERS!



The return of some old favourites

For their anniversary year, Wye Valley have brought back some old favourites for their cask and keg specials.

Towards the end of the year they're brewing one of their original favourites, *Supreme*, in November. Their session IPA, *Hopfather*, has been part of their core cask range since 2018. It has now joined their core keg range and for those of you out there who are gluten intolerant, it's gluten free. Finally, as the anniversary year comes to a close, we see 'Dorothy' return to their specials calendar in December with *Christmas Cracker*.

You can find the remainder of the year's beers here:

<https://www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk/our-beers/limited-release/>





North Cotswold Branch – Pub of the Year 2025

North Cotswold Branch are pleased to announce that the Bell Inn Moreton in Marsh have been voted our Pub of the Year for 2025.

The Bell that was a previous winner in 2023 was once again an excellent all-round pub with six handpumps offering a wide range of ales from local and national breweries that is credit to the Landlord John Longbottom negotiations with the owners Stonegate over his 10 years at the pub.

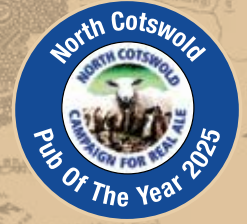
The pub is an old Coaching Inn set on Moreton's high street looking out on the towns War Memorial. With its connections with JR Tolkien and large courtyard and garden it is very popular with tourists. With Live Music most Saturday evenings it is also popular with locals and with a fine selection of real ale supported by a discount for



CAMRA members, a good number local and visiting drinkers make it our highest beer scoring pub in the Branch.

It expanded its traditional beer festival from tap takeovers during the Rugby Six Nations to a 40 Beer Festival this year with Cask ales from all over the Country to choose from over a two-week period in March this year.

The Runner Up Pub of the Year was the **Royal Oak at Gretton** which is a regular in the Good Beer Guide and has an excellent selection of Wye Valley beers kept in good condition.



An Inspirational Cotswold Inn

Considered by many to be JRR Tolkien's inspiration for the Prancing Pony, Middle Earth's most famous pub in The Lord of the Rings, The Bell Inn is a fine example of a traditional coaching inn providing quality food, drink and accommodation in welcoming surroundings.

We take great pride in the consistency of our draught beers and cask ales and endeavour to serve you a perfect pint every time. Discounts are available to CAMRA and Caravan Club members. Like music? Then you'll enjoy our regular Live Music evenings - see our website or Facebook for what's on:

www.thebellinnmoreton.co.uk

BEER FESTIVALS 2025

23rd Ale and Steam, 13th - 15th June
Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway

18th Moreton C.C. Beer Festival
12th - 13th September 2025

Further information on our website:
www.northcotswoldcamra.org.uk

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Opening hours: Mon to Thurs 12 noon – 11pm; Fri/Sat 12 noon – 11.30pm; Sun 12 noon – 10.30pm





The Bell Inn is Saved

As reported in the last edition of the Tippler, the Bell Inn's owner submitted plans to Cheltenham Borough Council to convert the site into a house, flats, and commercial space. The Bell's 78-year-old landlord of 30 years, Chris Evans, only became aware of the plans after they were reported in the press.

Following a big campaign to save the pub, the Council voted to refuse planning permission for the conversion.

In a further development, the Bell has now been listed as an 'Asset of Community Value'. This offers ongoing protection from conversion and also gives the community the right to bid for the property, given six months to prepare an offer, should the owner decide to sell it.

As quoted on the BBC: *'Chris Evans, landlord of The Bell Inn, said: 'Everyone involved in the campaign was extremely pleased with the two decisions.'*

'I think it virtually means it can't be turned into flats, certainly not for a long time, anyway. And if the owner wants to sell it, then the community has the right to buy it.'

An excellent result.



Cheltenham CAMRA Pub of the Year

Sandford Park Alehouse is 'Cheltenham Pub of the Year'

CAMRA members gathered on April 29th to present the Cheltenham Branch 'Pub of the Year Award' to the Sandford Park Alehouse. The pub continues to innovate, hosting a variety of events throughout the year, including the weekly 'Tail Wagging Tuesdays' - bring your dog to the pub for a free drink. The south-facing beer garden is ideal for summer events. These include a July 'Cheese & Cider' festival, and a 'Rum & Wings' festival in August.

The Alehouse appeals to a wide variety of people with 10 cask lines, 16 keg lines, extensive Belgian bottled beer, world beer, and ciders. Additionally, the Alehouse offers one of the best low (and alcohol-free) beer range



Above: Cheltenham CAMRA Chair, Rob Coldwell (left), presenting the Pub of the Year Award.

in town - ideal for designated drivers, and non-drinkers.

Cheltenham CAMRA Chair, Rob Coldwell said: "The Alehouse remains a destination pub, which attracts beer lovers and CAMRA members. Its ideally positioned, with the Strand (Cheltenham Cider Pub of the Year) and the Cheltenham Motor Club (three-time National CAMRA Club of the Year), all in walking distance of each other. This makes it the focal point for visitors to be able to discover Cheltenham's great pubs, clubs, and breweries.

"The Alehouse attracts customers across the age range and caters for all tastes. The pub continues to get stronger, and we wish them well in the next round of the National Pub of the Year competition".

Cheltenham CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year

The Strand is 'Cheltenham Cider Pub of the Year'

The Strand has been a fixture on Cheltenham's High Street for many years. It is now part of a small group that includes The Butcher's Hook in Thornbury, The White Hart in Wells, and The Famous Royal Navy Volunteer in Bristol's illustrious King Street.

The Strand offers twenty draught lines, of which half are devoted to cider and cask beers. And it is this focus on cider that is being recognized by Cheltenham CAMRA with the 2025 Cider Pub of the Year Award.

Rob Coldwell, Cheltenham CAMRA Chair, said, "With a quarter of the lines devoted to cider, the Strand is making a strong effort to promote an often-ignored part of our tradition. Hopefully, this award will

encourage the pub to put in even more effort to promote the great variety of cider and perry available in Gloucestershire. We hope that our other great venues might also be encouraged to do the same."



Pictured: Cheltenham CAMRA Chair, Rob Coldwell (left) and Gloucestershire CAMRA Cider Rep, Guy Vowels (far right) presenting the award.



Cotswold Beer Festival 2025

What an incredible festival the 2024 Cotswold Beer Festival was!

Although it rained a little on Saturday this did not dampen enthusiasm; in fact, the whole day sold out. You can relive the fun by watching the highlights video at <https://postlip.camra.org.uk>.

With only a few more weeks to wait until the 47th festival opens, from Friday 18th July to Sunday 20th July, it's time to secure your place at this iconic festival. Advance tickets for both days, and an 'All Weekend' pass, are available from the festival website. You can also purchase festival bus tickets and camping reservations.

The Cotswold Beer Festival is truly unique. It is, by just a few months, the second longest running CAMRA beer festival to be held at the same venue. It is set within Postlip's listed 12th century Tithe Barn, within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Beer drinkers can enjoy over one hundred real ales from around the UK. Because the festival also hosts the Gloucestershire Beer of the Year competition, there will be two beers from all the county breweries. The bottled beer bar is back this year, to enable visitors to try some beers not available in cask- and to offer a range of low and zero alcohol beers. Cider and perry fans will find great examples from the best small producers. Gin and Prosecco are also back together with a

great selection of food providers on site all weekend, including the return of the Postlip BBQ.

Entertainment wise, Double Bass Dan will be returning for 2025, but this time with his full band as Friday night's headliner. Saturday's headliner is not yet confirmed, but Ole Samba will be onsite on Saturday playing their Rio-inspired drumming music. Tewkesbury Town Band will also be onstage, in the barn, on Saturday afternoon.



Help put Gloucestershire Breweries on the Map

We all know how great our breweries are, and we all have our favorites. Why then are our brewers not so well-known outside the county?

One reason why is that few, if any, of the county's beers make it to the Champion Beer of Britain judging stage. Without that spotlight there is little to encourage Beer Festivals to stock and expose our beers to a wider audience.

CAMRA's Tasting Panels remain the strongest way to promote beers by judging, scoring and recommending beers to go forward for regional judging. The Cheltenham Tasting Panel covers half of the county - Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and North Cotswold Branches. Due to the panel's recommendations, the nine breweries covered by the panel are starting to appear in regional judging competitions.

Sadly, the Gloucestershire Tasting Panel has not met for some years. Consequently, the thirteen breweries in the Gloucester, Stroud, Cirencester, Dursley, and Forest of Dean Branches are not getting the support and exposure that they deserve.



Tony Lucas

This is where you can help

Tasting is fun, but we need enough capable and willing volunteers to join either of the county's two Tasting Panels. Any CAMRA member is eligible. Everyone's palate is different and therefore each Panel needs a wide range of participants. Training helps members identify the complex flavours and aromas present in beer. Panel members find that training helps to sharpen their appreciation and enjoyment of real ale.

How do they work?

Tasting Panels meet monthly at a pub, brewery, or beer festival to:

- **Complete Tasting Cards.** These record a taste profile for each beer, noting flavour attributes in aroma, taste, and aftertaste. The card also shows the score for CBoB (Champion Beer of Britain).
- **Create Tasting Notes** in the breweries section of the GBG and more detailed 'online notes', available for any CAMRA purpose, including support for beer festival programmes.
- **Check for any changes in beer character** and pass notes to the BLO (brewery Liaison Officer) to check for recipe changes with the brewery.

Panel members also complete tastings cards individually, whenever opportunities occur.

So please get involved. It's fun and who doesn't like drinking good beer!

If you are interested in taking the first step please contact the Regional Tasting Panel Coordinator at Chair@utttoxetercamra.org, who will refer you to the appropriate Tasting Panel Chair.

Tony Lucas
Chair Cheltenham Tasting Panel



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Ebike & Beer Rides

I have cycled most of my life and discovered the joy of ebikes about five years ago when I started to do some work for Darren at Cotswold ebikes, an ebike hire company based on the Organic Farmshop in Cirencester.

Recently, I helped put a couple of routes together and one of those that is new this year is an ebike and beer tour. This route is a joy to ride as it is as traffic free as possible and takes in a few fabulous pubs.

This is the story of the day Darren and I rode the route for the first time. Starting at the Organic Farmshop on the outskirts of Cirencester, we made our way to Sheephouse Lane which then joins the Welshway on route to Middle Duntisbourne, passing the now closed *Bear Inn* at Perrots Brook, up the hill to the side of the disused pub and turn right at the top just past Fire & Flow coffee, well worth a stop if you like your coffee. Turning right just after Middle Duntisbourne we followed the lanes to Duntisbourne Leer and alongside the long ford to Duntisbourne Abbots, all stunningly beautiful especially on the sunny day that we picked.

From Duntisbourne Abbots the route heads towards Cranham via Caudle Green and along Main Lane across the B4070 Birdlip road where there are stunning views towards The Malverns from where the lane drops steeply into Cranham village along a newly tarmacked lane that is heaven to cycle on. Dropping down the hill in the village it's a sharp left turn to the first stop of the day *The Black Horse* in Cranham (17 miles) which is a delightful community owned pub where I had a couple of pints of very well-kept Hop Union Whakapapa and a fish schnitzel sandwich. *The Black Horse* is such a success story for a community owned pub and is well worth a visit.



The Black Horse, Cranham

From *The Black Horse* it is a short but fabulous 2 mile ride to The Butchers Arms in Sheepscombe where we arrived just in time for a pint of Bristol Beer Factory Fortitude before the 3pm closing time, so we had to sit outside but it was glorious sunshine and a lovely view so no hardship but always check opening times if doing the route. The route does start off through the car park of *The Black Horse* and is off road for a very short stretch across the common but takes you onto the road through the upper part of Cranham past the school and church with lovely views down the valley towards Painswick and beyond.

Back on the bikes for another short 3.5mile but again very scenic route to *The Carpenters Arms* in Miserden for a pint of

Wye Valley HPA. Another stunning Cotswold village worth a stop to explore with a great little pub that is, at the time of writing, open all day, seven days a week and is another possible food stop if required.

Time was now running short so we made tracks back on the bikes for the 13 mile cycle back to the Organic Farmshop via the little hamlet of Edgeworth dropping steeply into another gorgeous valley before a quick climb and taking Long Hill Lane back to Daglingworth. The views from Long Hill Lane over Cirencester are impressive so its worth taking your time.

This makes for a good day out, allowing for a few stops and cycle time of 3.5 to 4 hours depending on ability. Darren now has the route available on Garmin and bikes are available from www.cotswoldebikes.co.uk.

I plan my routes on Komoot so if anyone wants to try it out with your own bikes I can email links, please feel free to send an email to cirencester@gloucestershire.camra.org.uk

Patrick Mills



The Butcher's Arms, Sheepscombe



The Carpenter's Arms, Miserden

Socials

In June we have two socials planned, the first being a visit to one of our members, Tim who runs Alkington Cidery in Damery and has an exciting new project underway of building a brand new cider house which is designed in a traditional way.

The second June social being a Saturday visit to Swindon where we will start at the fabulous Gluepot and then make our way up to Old Town to visit The Hop Kettle, Drink Valley, The Hop Inn, The Tuppenny and the relatively new Pulpit which is The Broadtown Brewery bar. We are very much looking forward to our visit to The Pulpit as Broadtown brew some of favourite beers but we rarely get to visit the brewery tap due to transport difficulties from Cirencester.

July sees a repeat of our now annual London pub crawl via the National Express from Cirencester, it is currently looking like a south of the river pub crawl starting in Borough, taking in Borough Market and finishing in the Waterloo area, the final list of pubs to be confirmed.

If anyone would like to join our socials please contact cirencester@gloucestershire.camra.org.uk

50 NOT OUT!

It's fifty years since Gloucestershire CAMRA was founded in the back room of the Royal Union pub in Tivoli Street, Cheltenham. In the mid-1970's it is quite fair to say that finding a decent pint of real ale was a real challenge.

Gloucestershire was dominated by the maroon and white corporate signage of the Whitbread Brewery, a legacy of takeovers of the Stroud Brewery Company and Cheltenham & Hereford Breweries that 'joined the Whitbread family' as part of the amalgamated West Country Breweries.

In 1960 West Country Brewery celebrated 200 of brewing in Cheltenham and Stroud and in a celebratory book Whitbread chairman Colonel W.H. Whitbread wrote: '... and on the occasion of their joint bicentenary wish them long life and prosperity in their joint venture.'

At the time both breweries were in operation, Cheltenham brewing traditional cask Pale Ale, Mild and Bitter and Stroud brewing Stroud Bitter, XX Bitter and XX Mild. In the early 1960's colourful West Country Ales - 'Best in the West' ceramic plaques were still being inlaid into their pubs. Cheltenham and Stroud breweries had lost their independence, but brewing carried on. Maybe the turning point came in 1968 when Whitbread acquired Flowers & Sons of Stratford on Avon, closed the brewery down and merged with West Country Breweries to form Whitbread Flowers. The Flowers Stratford brewery already had Flowers Keg in their portfolio, and with Gloster Keg (brewed



Photo: Mick Wilkes



at Stroud) becoming more popular. Cask beers were becoming less relevant. So, on Thursday 24th April 1975, a few like-minded real ale drinkers sat in the Royal Union quietly sipping their pints of Ind Coope Mild and Bitter. They were in the company of locals happily drinking the overly sweet and fizzy Double Diamond keg - introduced in 1962 and becoming the most widely drunk keg beer in the UK because of a clever advertising campaign, because allegedly, it 'worked wonders'.

With a Whitbread pub seemingly on every street corner, and traditionally brewed ale in terminal decline, something had to be done. The Campaign for Real Ale, that had been founded just four years earlier by four men in St Albans, was an obvious campaigning group to affiliate to. There was a huge battle ahead. In 1976, brewery-conditioned beer in kegs and tanks represented 63% of UK beer production. Whitbread was heavily promoting keg Trophy and Tankard, whilst Courage churned out Tavern.

One of those present at the inaugural meeting was John Barrett who wrote in the 'Tippler' ten years later. He said, 'I went along to the Royal Union to see what CAMRA was all about. Somehow from a roomful of people, most of all I didn't know, I found myself elected to the committee. I tried to protest

that I was not actually a member of CAMRA, but to no avail - £2 membership fee was extracted from me and that was that.'

The summer of 1975 was blessed with good weather, not as hot as the famous 1976 protracted heatwave, but ideal conditions to go out countywide exploring Gloucestershire's pubs and finding out where traditional draught beer might still be found.

It was discovered that although Whitbread pubs dominated there was a high concentration of Courage pubs in the far east of the county, a legacy of the takeover of the Cirencester Brewery by Simonds of Reading. There were scattered tied houses belonging to Wadworth of Devizes, a handful of Arkell's of Swindon pubs around Cirencester and just two Hook Norton pubs in the extreme north-east of the county in Moreton-in-Marsh and Churchill.

At that time, very few pubs were genuine free houses, and those that existed were often contented to serve keg instead of cask. The jewel in the crown, then as now, was the scattering of picturesque Donnington Brewery pubs in the Cotswolds but, back in the mid-1970's, most of their 17 pubs sold BB and SBA under gas pressure.

By far the most easily found real ale in Gloucestershire was West Country Pale Ale (WCPA), dispensed from squeaky old beer engines jostling for space between illuminated Trophy and Tankard fonts. More than often, however, WCPA was served under pressure, emerging on the bar in an unassuming plain square plastic box in the shadow of the national keg brands.

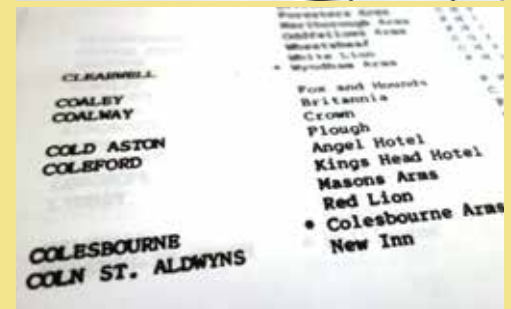
The heritage and association with Cheltenham brewery were then further diminished with the rebranding of the local beer as Whitbread PA. It was a well-liked session beer, akin to a light mild, and with a low gravity of just 3% ABV, was known as the choice for drivers venturing out in their cars to visit isolated pubs. CAMRA described Whitbread PA with derision in the 1976 Good Beer Guide as 'bland and unspectacular'.

The pub explorations of 1975 were processed into what was to become the first provisional edition of 'Real Ale in Gloucestershire', issued as a stapled eight-page A4 size guide in January 1976 and priced at just 10p. A total of 188 pubs



Listings from 'Real Ale in Gloucestershire'

Brewery	Brewery Code	1	2
Arkell	A	BBB	BB
Bass Worthington	B	North E.	Best Bitter
Courage	C	Best Bitter	Bitter
Donnington	D	SBA	BB
Whitbread	F	PA	
Hook Norton	H	Bitter	Mild
Ind Coope	I	Bitter	Mild
Mitchells & Butler	M	Brew XI	DPA
Ansells	N	Bitter	Mild
Ushers	U	Best Bitter	
Wadworth	W	6X	TPA



were surveyed throughout Gloucestershire. Alarming, 127 pubs were either tied or sold Whitbread WCPA.

Those early stalwarts searching for the best beers to drink in the county only found 17 beers from possibly 10 breweries: Ansells Bitter & Mild (Noel Arms, Chipping Campden); Arkells 2B, 3B (Highwayman, Elkstone), M&B Brew XI and Worthington E (AKA Draught Bass), Ind Coope Bitter & Mild (Royal Union, Cheltenham); Courage Bitter and Best; Donnington BB and SBA; Hook Norton Best Bitter and Mild; Wadworth IPA and 6X (with Old Timer in winter), Whitbread WCPA, and Ushers Best Bitter.

It is a disturbing and sobering thought that of those 188 pubs surveyed in 1975, 85 have since closed for good. Some have long been forgotten, like the Talbot Inn in Cheltenham, the Heywood in Cinderford, the Red Lion in Gloucester, the Star in Slad, the George at Yorkley and the Anchor in Stroud. Other closed pubs may be remembered with some affection such as the Seven Tuns in Chedworth or the County Arms in Gloucester.

Three years later in July 1978, the local CAMRA branch released an updated 'Real Ale in Gloucestershire' featuring ales from Davenport's, Devenish, Eldridge Pope, Greene King, Holdens, Marston's, Morland, Penhros, Samuel Smith, and Theakstons. The 1980's proved to be a boom time for the resurgence of real ale. The Cheltenham brewery was rebranded as the Flowers Brewery complete with the old William Shakespeare logo, albeit some 35 miles or so from its original Stratfordon Avon home. Ind Coope pubs



50 NOT OUT!

disappeared to be re-imagined as Halls Oxford & West Brewery, and even the infamous and much ridiculed Watneys *Red Barrel* keg beer was discontinued. It seemed that CAMRA had not only fought the battle but had won the war. Then came the Competition Commission's 'Beer Orders' of 1989, a well-meant initiative to reduce the number of large breweries' tied estates to create a fairer and wider choice of beer for pub customers. From that legislation sprung the pub companies (Pub Co's) such as Punch and Enterprise Inns, that have dominated and manipulated the pub scene ever since. But that's another story and a CAMRA campaign to be explored in another edition.

Geoff Sandles

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CASK CHRONICLES

With Alex Jordan

Craft Beer (oh no, not again...)

When you think about the term Craft Beer, I'd assume that you're thinking about an 8% triple hopped Double IPA, or a 14% Barrel aged Imperial Stout from a local independent brewery. Something strong that you could only drink in small quantities. Well, I'm here to convince you that you could think differently after reading this!

Craft beer bars are less common than they were 7-10 years ago, or at least much harder to come by now. If you walk down your local high street, the general beer selections and availabilities on the bars there are most likely to be from the general conglomerates, Heineken, Coors, Carling etc. Now, I'm not here to slate their products at all, but what I am here to do is to rhetorically ask, what happened to 'craft' beer?

Bottle shops and brewery taprooms seem to be the new trend that you're directed to go to if you'd like something remotely hoppy, brewed locally, or something available to take away and enjoy at home. I think that having a locally brewed product in a glass will always taste better than that of the beers you'd get in the average pub. Mainly because the taprooms are quite literally the showcase for the stellar example of how the beer should be served, and therefore, in turn, are the example and standard that all bars pouring the aforementioned beers should aim for.

My opinion on the subject, however, is that any beer which is brewed across the world IS a craft beer. Whether it's a home brewer trying out the art for the first time - craft. If there's a small, indie

brewery near you which is pumping out around 100,000 litres every year - craft. Huge brewery sending beer to the masses? Craft. It's a sliding scale to me. The reason for this is that anything which has been designed and prepared by a human (none of that AI malarkey) has been made that way intentionally, and most definitely with purpose. This could cover any creative/crafting art form - woodwork, fabrication, illustration, brewing... the list is endless of course.

Granted, the larger breweries now have fully automated kits for wort production

and fermentation control, but there will be someone manning those machines at the end of the day to make sure that the beer in

hand hits all of the quality control measures. Ultimately, there once was a person who physically crafted that recipe from nothing, and made it into something. This runs alongside the scientific and mathematical aspects of brewing, but there will have been due care and attention paid to every detail, every step of the way. So, to me, craft beer was a phase which really should never have been! The artistic and creative freedom that a brewer has when crafting a beer recipe comes from the years of experience and colossal passion that we so willingly work for.

Whether you're a die-hard Hazy DIPA fan, or a classic European Pilsner guru, at the end of the day, what you choose to drink is up to you, because you enjoy it for a reason. But in my opinion, we're all drinking "craft" beer!

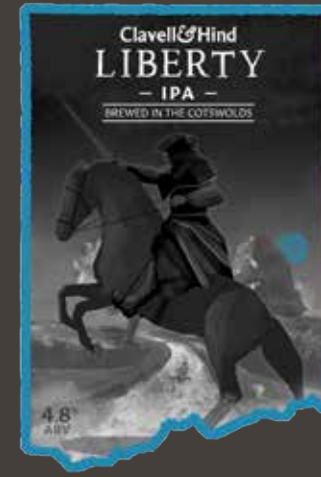
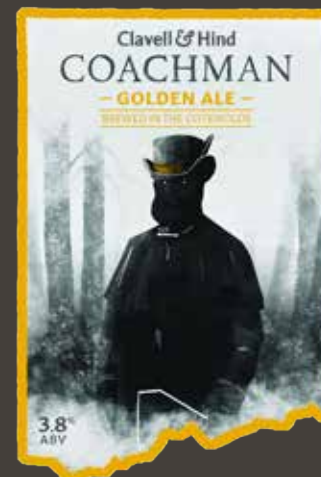
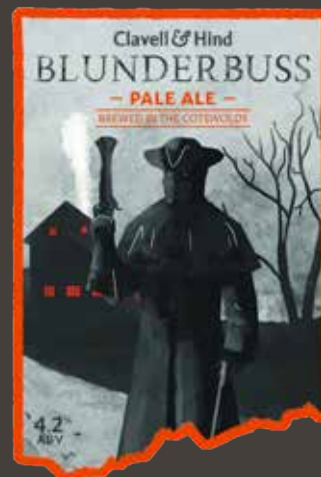
I'll be fermenting thoughts until next time!

Alex Jordan - Head Brewer, Clavell & Hind

"...taprooms are quite literally the showcase for the stellar example of how the beer should be served..."

Clavell & Hind

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It all Began Over the Pond

The Thirsty Pine, a new beer and music venue in Gloucester, has a rather unusual backstory.

It all starts, as every good beer story should, in a bar in Richmond, Virginia, back in 2007.

Escaping the summer West Coast heat and the tales of 'Nam from Herbie Knuckles, Richmond's most over friendly and talkative local, my dad and I dived into the first bar we saw on the street.

Dad instigated the conversation with the bartender by asking simply for a beer. The bemused girl behind the bar forewent the customary US warm welcome, and planted a menu the size of a GUS catalogue in front of us. There was every beer and style we could ever have dreamed of, we were happy.

A couple of hours later, and maybe 4 or 5 beers in, I made the proclamation (as every drunken beer lover does), that in the future I would open a bar such as this in the good old UK.

Most people then sober up, and see sense. But I'm not sensible (and I sure as anything can't remember the last time I was sober), and this was the start of a true beer journey.

I should add I was living and working in the Cayman Islands at that time, and traveling to the US as often as possible to learn more about the craft beer scene.

In 2009 I enrolled on a course with the American Brewers Guild, and over six months learned about the brewing process, culminating in six weeks working at Bridgeport Brewery in Portland, Oregon.

Portland was really one of the epicentres of craft brewing at that time, and I don't remember wasting a single day by not exploring every beer corner of this great city.

I decided to give up my pretty good life in a Cayman condo, and move back to the UK, to devote my time to bringing great beer to the people.

In 2013 I relocated from Lancashire to Bristol, and opened a venue totally dedicated to amazing independent beer. That first venture was in partnership with other people, and I often felt constricted with my head overflowing with ideas on how to promote beer.

Ultimately I moved on, and in 2018 opened my first sole venture, *The Siren's Calling* on Portishead Marina. On the back of Siren's success and losing my head again, I added a second in Lancashire during the dark days of Covid, *The Thirsty Duck*.

We were open for a grand total of 12 weeks in that strange 'reopening' period before they closed everything down again! Fortunately, by operating a bottle shop, when bars did reopen there was a ready customer base all set to come in and drink draught beer straight from the pump (what a novelty!)

Both these bars have become warm and inviting community hubs, and both have been recognised by the local CAMRA branches.

Siren's won Bristol Pub of the Year in 2023, and *The Thirsty*

Duck has won West Lancashire Cider Pub of the Year on four occasions (still aggrieved it hasn't yet won Pub of the Year but hey ho).

And in 2024, it was time to really promote independent beer on a big scale, so welcome to Gloucester and *The Thirsty Pine Beer Café*. With 43 draught lines of beer, a designated Belgian Beer bar (yet another story), and a large stage area for live music, this is another true moment of insanity by myself.

But I invite all beer lovers to come and explore the weird and wonderful, as well as the good old traditional, and raise that toast to the good old US of A (or maybe not!).

Andrew Holian



THE THIRSTY PINE
CRAFT ALE & BELGIAN BEER CAFÉ
& LIVE MUSIC VENUE



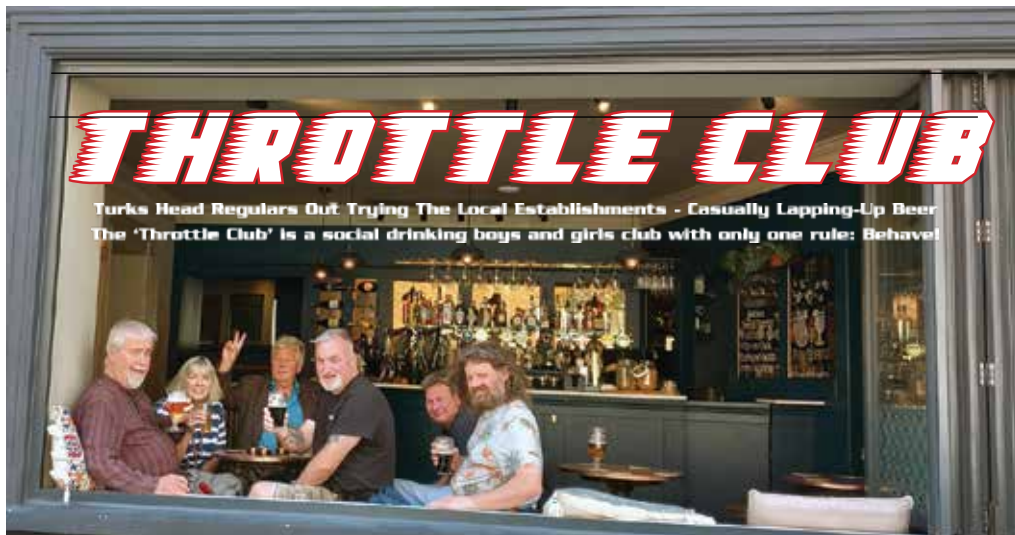
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So, Worcester it was...we went to Gloucester railway station to begin our journey. A strange start, some moron had smashed the glass doors to the station.

A lovely sunny day and seven of us met up. The train only takes about half an hour, so only time for a can on the train. It has been so sunny for ages and we had another sunny warm day. Hurrah!!!

Arriving in Worcester, it was just outside the station for our first stop. *The Saracens Head* - as we are from *The Turks Head* it's the same thing basically. We just had to visit! Very posh inside. I think it had just been decorated. I had a *Jubilee* at 4.5%. Very nice and a pretty fair price too.

Next stop, about five minutes up the road is *The Dragon Inn*. It's a lovely Churchend Brewery Pub. Very nice and no swearing at the bar which is all very civilised. We all sat outside at two beer tables. I chose the one in the shade, it was cooler and I didn't want to heat up my ale. It has an odd name. *Goats Milk bitter*. I checked online and luckily I think they are fibbing about using goats milk - doesn't seem it was used to make the beer. Thank god for that!

The four of our bunch who sat in the steaming sun drank quicker than us shade lovers did. Christine then remembered her 1930s loud whistle. She blew it and announced 'Ten minutes to leaving'. Wow!

What efficiency, ten minutes rushed by and we were off in the other direction.

The next stop was a great surprise. *The Foregate* (above) was lovely, big open windows and cool inside. The barman fed us with free bowls of olives, very continental. I think he was just checking we weren't the lower working classes who wouldn't eat olives; they were very nice.

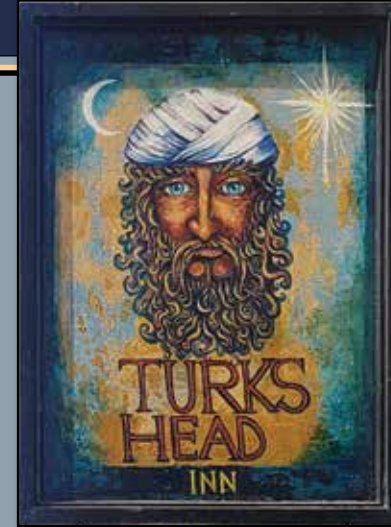
The beers were *Wye Valley HPA* and *Hopshed Frizzle*. So having Hopshed beers we duly voted the *Foregate* as this month's favourite boozie. Ale at £5, but a lovely pint and Worcester is generally dearer than us, so never mind. I heard the toilets were also lovely! Then Chris blew the whistle and we were off again.

Next was the *Slug and Lettuce* which grumpy old John didn't like and went elsewhere as they didn't do any real ales!

Lastly we found that *The Imperial* was temporarily closed before the live music at 5.00 pm. Too late for us so our last visit was the *Horn and Trumpet*. A traditional old pub with too many mindless TVs, but otherwise nice. Quite cheap but sadly I forget what I ordered there, but I am sure it was lovely.

From there it was only five minutes from the train station so off we went to Gloucester. Luckily the train finished there so we didn't have to pay attention or stay awake! Very handy...

Pete Sheehy



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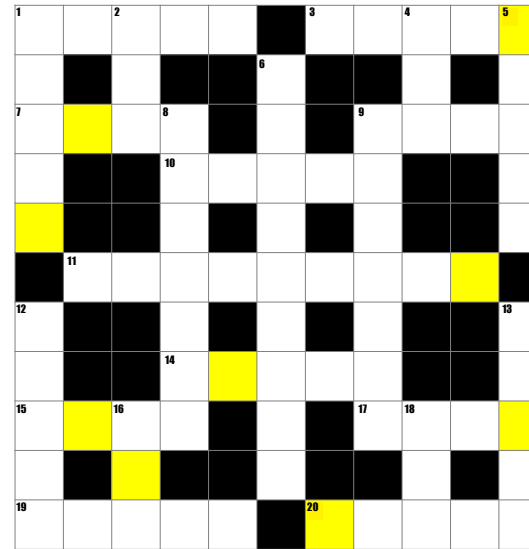
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Brewhouse & Kitchen Gloucester Quays have donated the brilliant prize of three brewery experience days to give away to the winners of the tricky crossword competition.



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Rearrange the yellow squares to find a brewery.

ACROSS

- Portly beer (5)
- Cut muddled verse (5)
- It felt wrong, not right (4)
- Danish drink in a tin? (4)
- Mabel disrupts walk (5)
- Best transformation of trite pets (9)
- Brief tangle in thread (5)
- Foliage ends all the extra stuff (4)
- Poet is back, but is dull (4)
- Croat changes role on stage (5)
- Many around Ukraine see this as a symbol of rebirth (5)

DOWN

- Girl is Sharon's friend? (5)
- Bad start for someone in command (4)
- Football surveillance starts violence and riots (3)
- Royal Academy gents like oriental soup (5)
- Brother's clothing can be a home (9)
- Remove launch (4,3)
- Allowed in action and destroyed (7)
- Vietnamese girl in river (5)
- Puzzle in bizarre bushfire (5)
- Insect begins attacking Nigel's toes (3)
- Pest mixes tar (3)





The Tegestologist

Welcome to a series all about Tegestology, the little known term for the collection of beer mats. This month it's all about Sports themed beer mats, of which he has quite a few in his collection . . .

There are many good reasons to go to the pub, many of which are my excuses for visiting, but of course hunting out beermats remains the top one for me.

It's quite a regular occurrence too, so much so that our dog, Phoenix, born in a pub and named after a hop variety, rarely passes one on a walk without climbing the step to the door, and it would be rude not to follow!

Is it a hobby? An obsession? Or maybe just a passion that is as strong now as it was 50 years ago.

The first thing I look for, even before eyeballing the cask ales on tap, is the mats on the tables. In stacks piled on the bar, or behind it, or under plant-pots, or propping up table legs... which often hide different mats to those first visible.

A quick chat with the barmaid will result in a viewing of the store cupboard and sometimes an invite to the cellar! I have been known to remove mats off tables, but normally replace them with ones from home to give a new lease of life to duplicates, and not deprive the benefactor.

If I know the pub I'm visiting in advance, I'll take some spares of the same brewery or old

ones from that region to offer as collateral in exchange for new ones. Lots of pubs like to pin 70-year-old beermats behind the bar. Indeed, only yesterday I was offered some interesting old Wadworth mats, which I had left behind on tables some months earlier.

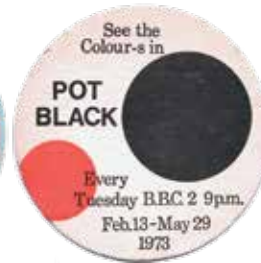
Some establishments have some funny ideas about using old beermats (even more peculiar than leaving mats on tables). A brewery bar at the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) refused some 1960's mats because they advertised a beer they no longer produce, and others for a competition which had obviously ended, in case they might be sued!

But I do steer clear of using old cigarette mats (which ARE indeed now illegal) in case the pub gets into trouble for promoting tobacco. It does make me smile when some of my collecting friends pick up the mats I'd left on GBBF bars, thinking them to be new issues.

In my last musings, I said the topic would be sporting beermats, so I ought to get to the point before being accused of digressing like Ronnie Corbett used to. To be honest there are thousands of beermats which either promote sporting events, cover competitions to win tickets, or just form part of a set offering details of sports played around the world.

Here are a few from my collection which span some 60 years, and a diverse number of sports.

I will start with the Iconic Watneys World cup mat from 1966. Unlike



the Royal Mail stamp issued at the same time, they never did a mat over-stamped with World Cup Winners on it. I particularly like this one as it mentions Mann's brewery, which, before their merger with Watneys in 1958, was Mann, Crossman & Paulin of East London. My mother-in-law was a Crossman of the very same brewing family, albeit a different (poorer) branch.

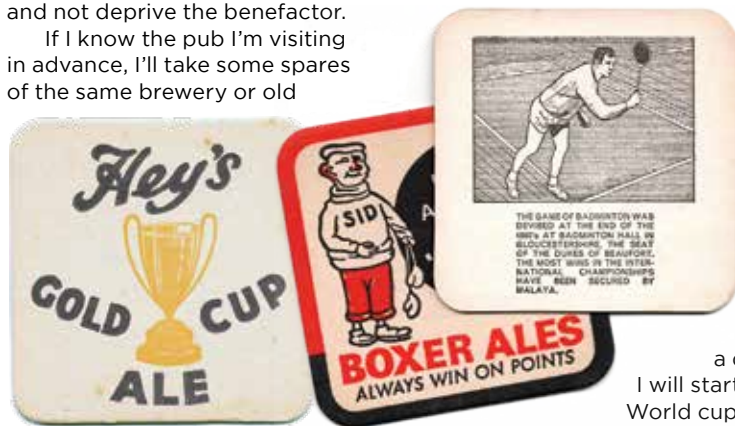
My next example is Hey's of Bradford Cat. 41 from 1962. Hey's weren't particular about the design of cup used on their mats, therefore its not really advertising a particular sport, however it represents a very important event here in Cheltenham.

Lets get back to proper sports, and here is Randall's of Jersey cat 28 from 1969. It is one of a set of 4 for 'Boxer Ales', promoted on the front, and this one appropriately, describes the creation of Badminton in the 1860's in Gloucestershire. I'd say that the equipment and attire has moved on a bit since the 60's, let alone a hundred years earlier. This mat, like the Pot Black mat, make no mention of the brewery on the sides shown. You'll have to take my word for it that this is a Skol beermat, but it is worthy of inclusion because of the significance of something we now take for granted. Snooker on a Colour TV only began 4 years earlier, with much of the population only able to watch in black & white. That must have been very tedious viewing. Snooker is regularly televised now along with darts and the current stars like Luke Humphries appear on mats just as John Lowe did, back in 1986.

Things were so much simpler back then. Breweries, or any company, have to be very careful what they put onto advertising material for fear of breaching copyright. I know of several mats which had to be withdrawn because of unauthorised use of the words FIFA, and other events deemed to no longer be part of our free-to-all heritage, but exclusive to some corporate behemoth. I can't remember if the boat race falls into that category, and certainly a small brewery like Chadlington would not be main sponsors of such nowadays. The name may be OK, but whatever you do, don't print their logo. Its on the reverse, in case they come knocking).

I'll finish off with the rugby world cup, as some matches were held locally at Kingsholm. Hard to believe it was 10 years ago that I donned a home-made Japan shirt for the game against USA. Gloucester brewery like many others, released beers for the series, and some issued mats like this one depicted. Alas Heineken and Guinness have pretty much tied that sport up these days. Maybe we'll all be drinking Tiddlywink ale in the near future?

Russell Murfitt



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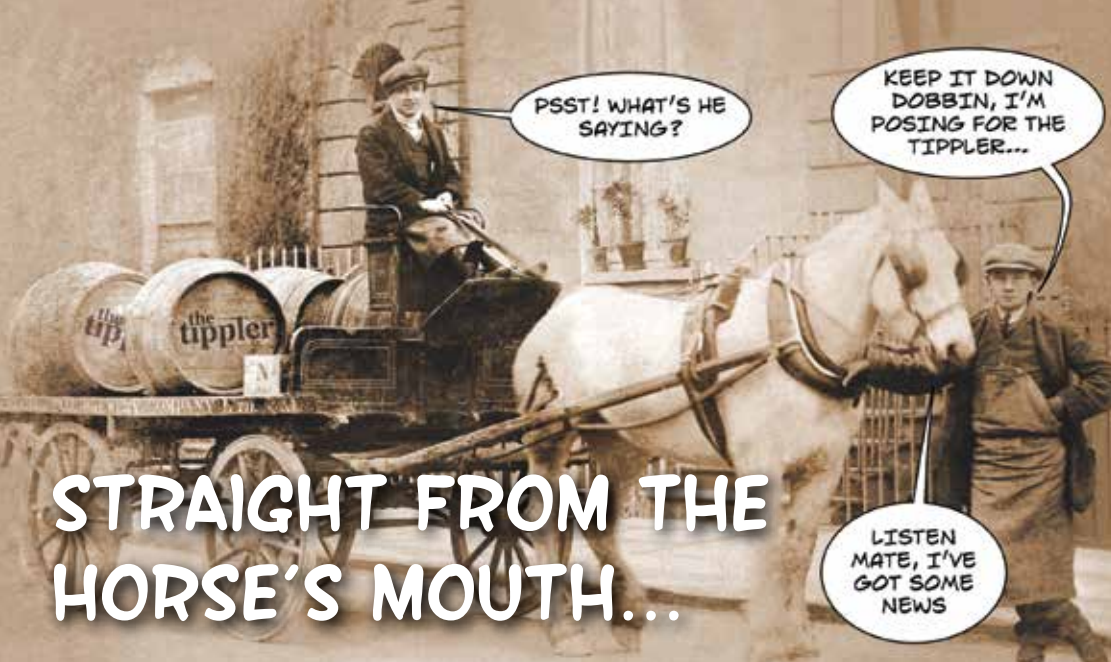
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STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH...

PUB & BREWERY NEWS...IN BRIEF

BREWERY NEWS...

Arkell's Brewery is delighted to introduce Jack's Juicy IPA, a brand-new, modern, hop-forward beer created by Arkell's Brewing Operative, Jack Bridgman (right), as part of his brewing apprenticeship.

The beer was officially launched at The Moonrakers pub in Swindon, where Arkell's Beer Champions from Managed Houses and the Chair of Swindon & North Wilts CAMRA branch were among the first to sample it.

This 4.5% ABV India Pale Ale is packed with tropical fruit flavours, showcasing an exciting new hop variety, Krush, which has never been used at the brewery before.

Jack, who has been with Arkell's since 2012, as part of his apprenticeship, was tasked by his university to create a beer from scratch..

When designing Jack's Juicy IPA, Jack wanted to create a beer that fell into the bracket of IPA, NEIPA (New England IPA). Understanding that the key to these styles is a light malt base that allows hop flavours to shine, he carefully selected a blend of



Maris Otter, Cara Malt, and Wheat Malt. This combination provides enough body and mouthfeel without overpowering the hops.

From concept to cask, Jack's Juicy IPA is Jack's own creation. Pouring a pale golden hue, it bursts with tropical fruit aromas of guava and peach, complemented by bright citrus and lemon flavours. The key to its juicy character is Krush, a new hop variety that brings bold, modern fruit-forward notes.

Arkell's Brewery is also excited to announce the return of Spring Hopper,

its much-loved seasonal pale ale. Back by popular demand, the brew is now pouring in a selection of Arkell's pubs across Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, Hampshire, and Oxfordshire.

Crafted to celebrate the changing of the seasons, Spring Hopper is making a timely return as the days get longer and the beer gardens fill up. A seasonal standout, it pairs perfectly with blue skies, long evenings, and a second round.

Ashton Brewery, Cheltenham, were presented with the Tewkesbury Winter Ale Festival's 'Beer of the Festival' for their 'Jaffa Cake'. The presentation took place at the *Cross House Tavern*, Tewkesbury with plenty in attendance.

Clavell & Hind brewery, Cheltenham, are partnering with Cheltenham Trust Bars, which will now feature Clavell & Hind's branding and products. *The Garden Bar*, Imperial Gardens, and the newly refreshed Pillar Room at Cheltenham Town Hall will serve a selection of Clavell & Hind's beers, including Black Bess Stout, Coachman Golden Ale, Blunderbuss

Pale Ale, Liberty IPA, Outlaw Pilsner, and Bad Apple Cider.

Corinium Ales now open three days a week for the summer Friday and Saturday 3:00pm to 7:00pm and Sunday 2:00pm to 5:00pm. They brewed a delicious 3.2% Mild, *C Rex*, for Mild May which is proving a great success and they are awaiting elderflower season in order to brew their seasonal *Pliny the Elderflower*.

Lucy Cordrey from Corinium comments: "We've had a great start to 2025 and would like to thank all our customers and supporters! We're hoping to branch out a little beyond Cirencester this year, so keep an eye out for Corinium beers on the pumps in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud. Our Saturday 'foodie nights'; Summer BBQ with the Malvern Morris & Sword Dancers; and other events will be in full swing too. We'll also be running our micro real ale bar at Cirencester's Phoenix Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend. So, get out there and enjoy your beers and summertime!!"

>

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The Tippler The Magazine of the Gloucestershire Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale

43

Stroud Brewery has geared up for spring being sprung, and the nettles is riz...OK, a bit of poetic licence, but spring is here and so are Stroud Brewery's seasonal twists. Fresh young nettles add a zing with no sting (the boiling stage neutralises the stinging cells) to its 4.2% *Stinger* Pale Ale. Meanwhile, elderflowers create a delicate floral note for 4.9% *Alderflower* Pale Ale.

Ramblers Reward, made with organic malt and Slovenian Cardinal hops, is a 3.4% session cask pale ale with soft citrus, gentle herby bitterness, and a clean, crisp finish. Low in strength but full of flavour.

All beers are available now, in the taproom and many pubs in the area.

This harmony with nature helped Stroud Brewery earn the Sustainable Business Award at SIBA's 2025 Business Awards, announced at the BeerX Festival in March. The team is proud to have their environmental efforts recognised nationally, while continuing to produce top-quality beer.

Looking for an excuse to unwind? Don't miss the Malty Story Festival, 6-8 June. For just £13 max (cheaper at other times), enjoy three days of great local music, DJs, entertainment, plus some national headline acts. It's a repeat of last year's hugely successful 18th birthday celebration, and is set to be another fantastic event. Tickets are only available on the door. A Flavour Bomb in Every Pint.

Tewkesbury Brewing is being redeveloped with brewing currently suspended for a building upgrade. Just completed is the work on a mezzanine floor so that brewing can be moved upstairs, leaving the ground floor to be developed as a taproom, opening mid-summer. There's a new bottling plant and the range of beers will shortly be expanded too, so there's plenty of stuff going on.

PUB NEWS...

In Cheltenham, **The Sandford Park Alehouse**, former CAMRA National Pub of the Year, has been voted Cheltenham Pub of the Year. Alongside **The Strand** being voted Cheltenham Cider Pub of the Year.

The Moon Under Water, Bath Road, Cheltenham is closing on 28th April for four weeks, for refurbishment.

The Miller, also on Bath Road, has reopened but reportedly has no real ale.

Wadworth are advertising for a new landlord for **The Bayshill**. The saga of **The 12 Bells** in Cirencester continues with Cotswold District Council Planning Enforcement team now involved having carried out a site visit, Cirencester CAMRA have also written to their local MP in order to try and move things forward with the reopening of this once fabulous award winning town centre pub.

Sadly the change of use application for **The Wheatshaf** in Cricklade Street Cirencester was successful so the town loses yet another of its traditional old pubs despite a number of excellent objections and assurances from the ward Councillor that it would go before the committee, which it did not.

The Golden Farm in Cirencester has reopened with new tenants and they have made a great start with new menus, a facelift and two real ales.

Welcome back to Danni at **The Hop Kettle** in The Woolmarket Cirencester, great to see her behind the bar again

Work on **The Wild Duck** is now in full swing and we hear, not officially, that it is due to reopen in April 2026. It appears to have been sold by Youngs and the name on the latest planning information is Country Creatures Ltd who own **The Masons Arms** and **Double Red Duke**, both in Clanfield Oxfordshire. This all seems to be good news and we will hopefully have a fully refurbished Wild Duck this time next year.

The Bakers Arms in Somerford Keynes has changed tenant and we hear that The Lower Mill Estate has now taken on the pub we look forward to visiting shortly.

Martin Jones, Pubs Officer for the North Cotswolds CAMRA reports:

The Branch pub scene in the North Cotswolds is changing considerably with the rise of the 'Gastro Pub' being to preferred model for the majority of our owners with the choice and quality of beer and cider not being a priority. We understand these pubs need to be destination locations and now we do not have a wet led pub in the branch.

Our 10 Good Beer Guide Pubs are all thriving and deserve their entry as sellers of excellent real ale from independent brewers.

The concern is the closure of some of our previous Good Beer Guide regulars and award winners has reduced the competition for places in the guide. These closures are:

The Craven Arms at Brockhampton, **Seven Tuns** at Chedworth, **The Plough** at Cold Aston, **The Corner Cupboard** in Winchcombe that were all in the guide. Add to that the long-term closure of free houses, **The Churchill Arms** at Paxford due to fire and the long-term closure of **The Farriers Arms** at Todenham, and restricted hours at many other pubs operate are limiting choice for ale and cider drinkers.

The good news is that restoration work at The Churchill Arms now appears to be happening, and The Farriers has planning in to refurbish it as a small hotel.

The Seven Tuns is subject to proposed community buy out and has a dedicated site seventunsactiongroup.co.uk.

We are lucky that the picture is not as bad as it could be due to the **Donnington Brewery** Estate keeping many pubs open that we fear would close otherwise.

The big Pubco companies are not such a sympathetic bunch and are happy to force out landlords and leave premises empty with property value in the Cotswolds making a sale of the site an attractive option. **The Coach and Horses** at Bourton being an example of this.

To end on a positive note, those pubs who support independent breweries especially locally, are very often those who thrive and we must continue to herald them as the model to succeed to others.

The Old Stocks Inn at Stow-on-the-Wold, a 17th century coaching inn, has been bought by family brewery Arkell's. The pub which sits in the town's Market Square right next door to the Stag at Stow, another pub that Arkell's has owned for nearly 30 years.

The Old Stocks Inn, which had a guide sale price of £3M, has 16 individually-designed bedrooms which, when combined with the rooms at its next-door-neighbour, The Stag at Stow, will offer visitors almost 40 rooms. And it's this which made the purchase so attractive to the brewery.

Managing Director, George Arkell, said: "The new pub will be run by Mark Vance and Zac Weinberg, who have successfully run The Stag at Stow for the past 12 years.

"The previous owners have done a great job modernising The Old Stocks over the last 11 years. It's a wonderful property in an exceptional location, and with Mark and Zac at the helm, we're confident it will continue to go from strength to strength."

CLUB NEWS...

The Cheltenham Motor Club has, once again been voted Cheltenham Club of the Year.

Next year the CMC will be judged in the new West Central Region, comprising Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire.

On a sad note, 'George' Way, wife of Cheltenham Motor Club Steward Neil Way, passed away in April. The Cheltenham Branch and all CAMRA friends, would like to express our condolences to Neil and his family at this sad time.



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COULD THE INTANGIBLE HELP SAVE CASK ALES AND OUR PUBS?



It's possible to react sceptically to a something called UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage status. After all, the word 'intangible' - what does that mean?

But here's a grassroots petition on the go calling for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage status this status to be awarded to cask ale. But far from being a joke, it's an idea that could help address current challenges facing the sector whilst celebrating this unique aspect of British culture.

UNESCO's designation protects cultural practices and traditions that define a nation's identity. Think French baguettes, Arabic coffee, dragon boat festivals, and Belgian beer. If Belgium's beer makes the list, why not our cask ale?

Cask ale is a living product with deep roots in British history which many would argue is certainly part of our culture.

Awarding it heritage status could be a first step in protecting it, and something else also in decline and just as important - the pub.

How could one help the other? Due to cask ale not being refrigerated, it needs

skilled cellar management to keep it in good condition. So, where else could cask ale be drunk apart from in pubs? Safeguarding cask ale means safeguarding pubs, too.

And pubs are more than simply places to drink - they're social hubs. They offer a space to connect, relax, and chat. Unlike churches or schools, pubs provide a social space open to all where people can sit, relax and talk about anything and everything.

We need to switch our mindset on cask ale from being just a drink, to being a pint of craftsmanship, heritage and culture, just as much part of the country's personality as fish and chips, the Monarchy and Sunday roasts.

There's even evidence of growing interest in cask ale among young people. A recent YouGov survey shows that sales of cask ales to 18-24-year-old drinkers jumped from 16% to 25% in a year.

Could one UNESCO designation achieve a triple win? Protecting cask ale, preserving pubs, and inspiring future generations? The title may be "intangible," but the impact could be anything but.

Show support and sign the petition: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/716686>

WHY NOT



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BREWERY TOURS TO ULEY BREWERY - SEE PAGE 61!

BREWERY TOURS TO STROUD BREWERY - SEE PAGE 65!

ONE NIGHT STAY FOR TWO AT THE CROWN HOTEL WORCESTER - SEE PAGE 73!

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Make that a Double!

It's a double triumph for the Carpenters Arms at Westrip—and a double triumph for the third year running.

The pub is not just Stroud CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year, but has prevailed in the next round to be crowned Gloucestershire CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year again, winning against such formidable cider strongholds as the Pelican, Gloucester, and the Hoptician, Dursley. (Cirencester and Forest of Dean did not nominate a pub).

Stroud CAMRA presented Sammy McKie, owner and licensee of the Carpenters Arms, with a framed certificate as our Cider Pub of the Year for 2025 on a cool overcast Sunday in April. Sammy reciprocated by bringing out a large tray of cider samples for those taking part in the photos.

Sammy has had the area over the bar repainted (including the new CAMRA logo) reflecting her current award status, though a further win may jeopardise the integrity of this artwork.

Aside from (officially) the best range of cider in Gloucestershire, for those who preferred other libations there were three real ales and all the usual sedative-hypnotics behind the double-sided bar that serves both the lounge and the public bar.

The musical backdrop to proceedings was provided by the Wurzels and in particular their track, 'I am a Cider Drinker', which reached number three in the charts in September 1976.

As well as Stroud CAMRA members, Andrew Frape, Gloucestershire CAMRA Chair, was there in recognition of the pub being crowned Gloucestershire CAMRA

Cider Pub of the Year. Jim Hill from Dursley CAMRA showed his enthusiasm for the pub by tunnelling under the wall from Dursley.

The Carpenters is a whitewashed stone-built pub right at the north-western edge of the Cashes Green conurbation, close to the Cotswold Way. It is located on a steep hillside with spectacular and panoramic views over Stroud, from Rodborough Fort to the Bear Hotel at Amberley and across to Selsley, and all along the valley towards the River Severn.

Sammy bought the pub in 2019 and has proved a hands-on, energetic and enterprising publican. There's always something going on at the 'Carps', whether it's live music, a quiz, a raffle, Singo Bingo, Let's Paint, breakfast at the weekend, steak nights, premiership rugby on the widescreen TV, carols at Christmas, and even an annual dog show!

This is quite a turnaround for the pub, which was once closed and risked being lost to a residential conversion after being declared unviable by so-called 'industry specialists'

Previously the pub was owned by Punch Taverns with landlord Steve Poulter as their tenant for many years. It was subject to an unsuccessful application by Pubmaster (now part of Punch) for planning permission for conversion to residential in 1997. This was refused by Stroud District Council. Pubmaster went to appeal, the appeal was rejected and the pub was saved from closure.

Perhaps because of this experience, according to locals Punch sold the pub to landlord Steve Poulter and almost immediately he sold it to Neon Homes and



became their tenant. Neon Homes received planning permission to build two houses on part of the car park.

Perhaps also because of Pubmaster's experience, Neon Homes then commissioned Plainview Planning to prepare a Future Options document that stated baldly that 'changes in drinking habits and its peripheral location present a day-to-day challenge to the ability of the pub to stay up and running. A viability report undertaken by industry specialists concludes that the pub is not viable.'

Plainview Planning fail to mention that despite the pub's 'peripheral location' it is at the edge of a densely built up urban area (Cashes Green) with hundreds of people within walking distance, has stunning views from the garden and happens to be on the Cotswold Way. Surely these are material considerations and trump any 'viability report' undertaken by self-styled 'industry specialists' hired to conclude that 'the pub is not viable'? As is the fact that neighbourhoods with pubs are seen as desirable and that is reflected in higher house prices.

The Carpenters Arms was advertised for sale as an 'ideal lifestyle purchase [that] would also appeal to purchasers looking to

open on restricted hours and benefit from three-bedroom private accommodation in a desirable residential area'. Neon Homes bought the pub and built two houses on part of the car park. It was eventually advertised as for sale freehold at £300,000 or to let on a free-of-tie lease. Sammy McKie bought the pub in 2019.

The Carps now goes into the next round for the Gloucestershire area award and is up against the Cross House Tavern, Tewkesbury, and the Strand, Cheltenham. The winner of this round goes up against the best that Herefordshire, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire have to offer. And so on, until one pub out of a shortlist of four is crowned national CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year.

Which just goes to show that it's not all bad news on the pub front and that a village local in a peripheral location at the edge of an urban area, with a hands-on, energetic and enterprising publican can triumph against the odds over property speculators intent on converting any pubs they get their greedy hands on to residential in order to achieve a higher return.

That's surely worth raising a glass (of cider) to?

Tim Mars

"Sammy bought the pub in 2019 and has proved to be a hands-on, energetic and enterprising publican"

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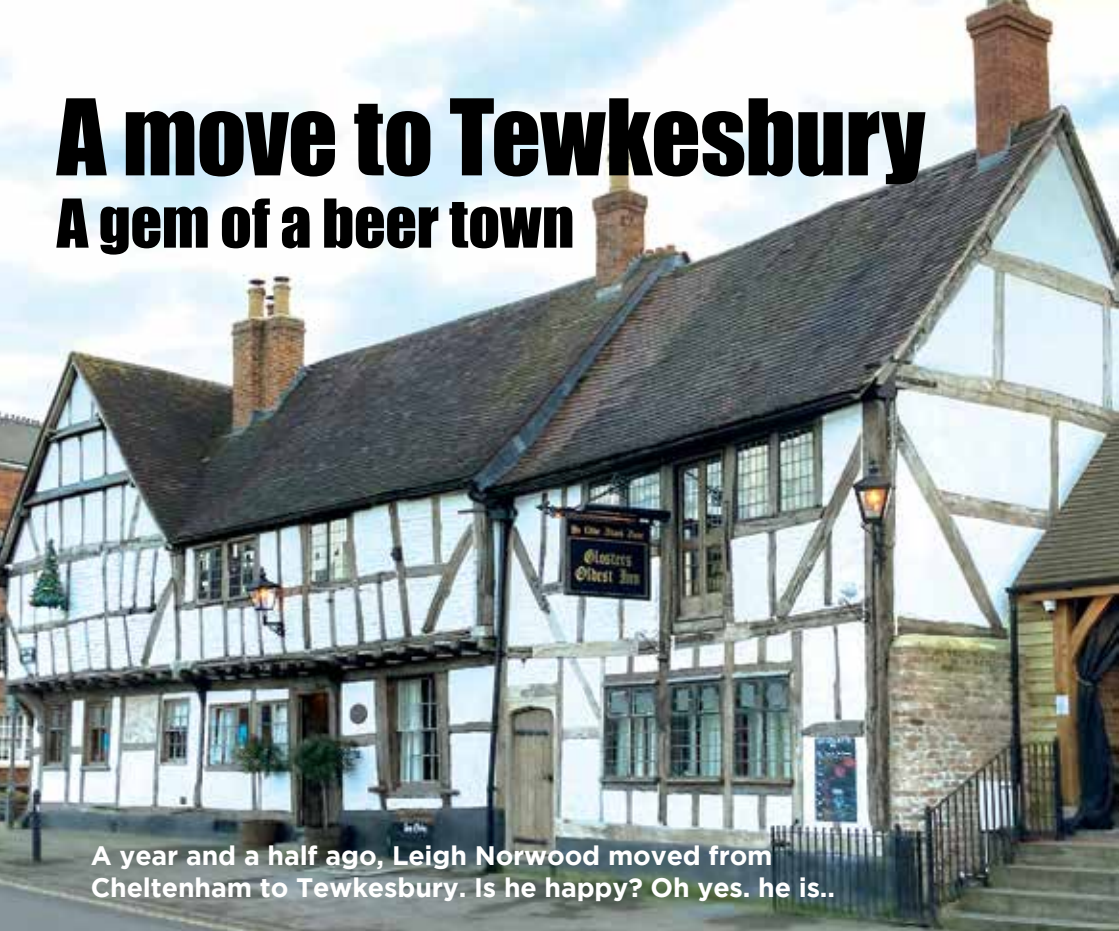


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A move to Tewkesbury

A gem of a beer town



A year and a half ago, Leigh Norwood moved from Cheltenham to Tewkesbury. Is he happy? Oh yes. he is..

In November 2023, I packed my bags and settled into a charming 18th-century terraced cottage right in the heart of Tewkesbury.

I had visited the town many times before, especially for the CAMRA-run Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival and the fantastic 'Tewkesbury Live', but I was pleasantly surprised to discover just how vibrant the beer scene is here. It's hard to believe that Tewkesbury, which is about a tenth the size of Cheltenham, could rival my old hometown in terms of beer offerings, but I genuinely believe it does.

Anyone who knows me will know that I've long been a fan of Cheltenham as a top-notch beer destination. With its former CAMRA National Pub and National Club of the Year, the incredible DEYA brewery and some cracking pubs, (not to mention the

incredible bottle shop and craft beer bar that is Favourite Beers), Cheltenham has always had a special place in my heart. But guess what? My big move to Tewkesbury, has changed my view somewhat, let me tell you, this little town is a hidden gem when it comes to real ale!

Most of the best beer spots are conveniently located in the town centre, making it easy to hop from one to another. I've found a few favourites that I frequent regularly, and I'd love to share my thoughts on these venues with you. Trust me, Tewkesbury is a beer lover's paradise!

Ye Olde Black Bear

First up is *Ye Olde Black Bear* (above), which is not only a fantastic pub but also just a stone's throw from my front door. This

historic establishment, believed to have been built in 1308, is the oldest pub still standing in Gloucestershire and one of the oldest in the entire country! After a stunning six-year renovation, it reopened in the summer of 2023, and has become a bustling hub for the community.

From a beer lover's perspective, the *Olde Black Bear* is a dream come true. They offer a wide selection of real ales, with five or six core options from renowned breweries like Wye Valley, Uley, and Theakston, plus three or four guest ales added at weekends. As part of the renovation, owner, and beer lover, Luke Haynes, made sure to create two cellars at different temperatures - one for cask ales and another for keg beers - so you can enjoy your ales at their best. They also have a small but impressive range of craft beers, including DEYA's *Steady Rolling Man* and the occasional German and Belgian brews. The staff here are super friendly and knowledgeable, making your experience even better.

The pub also hosts live music on weekends and has a lovely riverside garden where they hold various events throughout the year, including a large stage for the annual Tewkesbury Live festival, big screens for football tournaments and large marquees for Oktoberfest and Christmas/New year. Delicious and affordable food is provided by a rotating set of guest street food vendors, and they have recently started to provide Sunday roasts.

Inferno Brewery Tap

Next on my list is the *Inferno Brewery Tap Room*, located in the old skittles alley of the now-closed *White Bear Inn*. Founded by Chris Bowley in 2018, this brewery has quickly made a name for itself. In the winter, the tap room (including a small stage) is upstairs in the refurbished skittles alley, while in the summer, it moves downstairs with an outdoor stage and plenty of seating.

Chris is passionate about supporting local music, and you can often catch some fantastic live acts here, especially during the fringe event which Chris puts on to complement the Tewkesbury Live festival. But let's not forget the real stars of the

show - the beers! They have up to six of Chris's own ales on hand pull, showcasing a variety of styles, strengths and flavours. At a recent CAMRA tasting panel, all five ales assessed were very well-received, with all of them being put forward in the list of seven Gloucestershire beers for the CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain competition. Chris' beers have also regularly won top awards at local CAMRA beer festivals.

The setting is a bit rustic as are the downstairs toilets, but the buzz can be electric, especially when the live music is playing. If you haven't checked out this hidden gem yet, make it your next stop in Tewkesbury! Just remember to check their opening hours before you go.

Cross House Tavern

Last but not least of my regular haunts is the *Cross House Tavern*, which is situated in one of Tewkesbury's older historic buildings near the Cross. Laurence Mills, the owner, transformed it into a micro pub when he gave up his tenancy of the *Berkeley Arms* across the street in 2019. He's been continuously



The bar at the Inferno Brewery Tap



Spoilt for choice in The Cross House Tavern

A move to Tewkesbury: a gem of a beer town



renovating the space, revealing some amazing original features that give it the feel of what a pub would have been like more than 100 years ago.

This historical experience is enhanced by the ales being served by gravity, directly from the casks. You can usually find between 8 and 10 ales on tap, with a couple often exceeding 6.0% ABV. They also have a great selection of local ciders, but don't even think about asking for lager here!

If the front bar is busy, don't worry - there are more cozy rooms in the back where, thanks to the lack of distractions, you can enjoy a good chat over a fine ale. This pub has rightfully earned the title of Tewkesbury CAMRA Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year for both 2023 and 2024.

This is a great venue during the colder months of the year, but due to the style of dispense, the ales can suffer a bit during hot summer days. Laurence has big plans for the future and has recently cleared and renovated a couple of cellars. Watch this space.

Other Notable Mentions

There are a few other real ale pubs worth mentioning that I occasionally visit. *The Berkeley Arms*, a Wadsworth's pub, usually has a guest ale alongside their own brews, and it's set in a stunning 15th-century timber-framed building. Then there's the *Royal Hop Pole Hotel*, across the road from the Berkeley. Again, based in a historical building and mentioned in Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. It has been owned by Wetherspoons since 2008 and is often regarded as one of



The Berkeley Arms and The Nottingham Arms

their best in the country. My occasional visits definitely bear that out.

The final pub I should give a shout out to is the *Nottingham Arms* based on the High Street. This was one of the first pubs I remember frequenting in Tewkesbury and is always worth a visit. They have a reasonable selection of cask ales, and the food served there is to die for. The pub is set in a fascinating 16th century building, although the façade is much more recent. A more adventurous range of real ales here could quickly turn my list of regular haunts from three to four.

While there are seven other pubs in town that serve real ales, I have visited them all but find that they don't always match the quality and variety of the six I've mentioned. However, I'm optimistic about *The Britannia*, as the new landlady seems eager to improve their cask ale offerings.

So, if you haven't explored the beer scene in Tewkesbury lately, I highly recommend giving it a shot. You won't be disappointed!

Leigh Norwood

THE INDEPENDENT PUB AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY



Black Bear

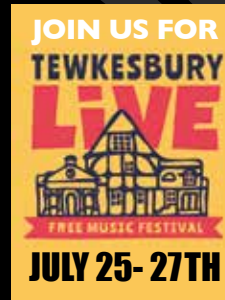
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DEAF BOY WANDERIN' JOHN



We can't seem to keep him in Gloucestershire – this time our restless rambler is off to sample the bucolic delights of the neighbouring Herefordshire countryside.

A quick journey along the M50 takes you towards Ledbury and thence to the quaint spread-out village of Wellington Heath.

Very conveniently, the walk starts and finishes in the car park, or rather bar, of the local hostelry, The Farmers Arms. Strike straight out of the car park and be prepared for a steep climb, as the pub is at the bottom end of a lovely valley.

The path proceeds upwards between houses that look like they were developed carefully over the last 100 years, rather than being plonked down by modern-day builders in 100 minutes. As you ascend the path, the hills and valleys that criss-cross this area come gradually into view, providing a photographic vision of pristine Herefordshire countryside at its very best. On clear days, and I was lucky and can vouch for this fact, you can see the outline of the Black Mountains glowering on the distant horizon.

The upward path gives way for a short while to a typical Herefordshire lane, being narrow, but flanked by tall hedges reminiscent of similar lanes in Devon and Cornwall. Down there the hedges are scenic, whereas in Herefordshire they are much more important and protect the growth of that vital brewing ingredient, hops of course!



The Farmers Arms, Wellington Heath

The route heads towards Oyster Hill, rudely designated in some sources as a tump – although as tumps go, it is one of the biggest at around 214m high (705ft in old money).

More steady climbing through a classical English country estate, passing by Hope End House, surrounded by a wall, presumably to keep the peasants out, and the views unsullied by their coarse presence.

This however is the childhood home of the poet Elizabeth Barrett-Browning between 1809 and 1832. What an amazing place to grow up in, that is as long as you like living in a rather isolated house miles away from the bright city lights of Gloucester, or even Ledbury for that matter. As all you literacy buffs know, she married Robert Browning in secret, resulting in daddy instantly disinheriting her.

Whilst living at Hope End, she became very ill with an excruciating spinal problem. Pain relief was provided by doses of opium-based laudanum, not the local cider, although this may have aided her inspirational poetry, rather than being affected by the wonderful countryside that surrounded her. Make your own mind up, here are a few lines of verse from a poem entitled *The Lost Bower* written about Hope End:



Middle: Elizabeth Barrett-Browning



Hope End House



All Saints, Coddington

'Green the land is where my daily Steps in jocund childhood played, Dimpled close with hill and valley, Dappled very close with shade: Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade.'

Once past the house, the summit of Oyster Hill rises steeply in front of you, but it is worth risking oxygen deprivation for the extensive views are a just reward. On a wet, foggy day do a different walk or stay in the pub, but on a clear day, just like The Who, you can see for miles.

To the east are the Misty Mountains (Malvern Hills), to the West, the Black Mountains and to the North (with a little help from telescopes or a vivid imagination) Clee Hill in far-off Shropshire has been identified.

Take your time, slowly circle around and take in one of England's stunning landscapes. A slow descent follows, passing through more narrow country lanes, arriving at the ancient parish church at Coddington.

Sit by the old damaged churchyard cross and gaze across the verdant, peaceful fields of rural Herefordshire. The church bells have recently been restored and if you are lucky like I was, a group of campanologists (gender disputed) were making the bells peel out a magical accompaniment in a magical setting.

You lucky people, this walk has another treat in store. If you have followed the route carefully you should now be up the top of a slope and, looking down at the rows of vines that comprise Coddington Vineyard.

The path actually weaves its way between the rows of vines passing a building where wine-tasting takes place

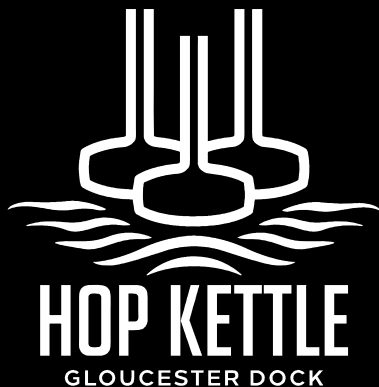


and maybe brings an abrupt halt to the walk. Luckily, I suppose, it was closed the day I walked past, so check opening times etc if you expect to sojourn here a while.

After the excitement induced by the beautiful scenery or a few glasses of wine, those verdant fields have to be walked to return to the valley in which Wellington Heath village is built and the welcome sight of The Farmers Arms. This is a truly delightful pub set a little bit back on a slope behind the car park. It has a good reputation for stocking a range of local ciders, though draft beers were Butty Bach and Wye Valley when I visited.

The pub can be found in the Good Beer Guide. All I can say about lunch is that it was exceptional and afterwards I could only manage the walk to my car. This 5 mile walk definitely ranks in my Top Ten and will delight any one who loves the English countryside.

Deaf Boy



2025: Hop Kettle's Year of Innovation

Twelve years ago the first brewery in the Red Lion Inn, Cricklade opened and since then, they have put a lot of time and effort into creating an exciting core range of beers that showcase the best of as many different styles of beers as possible.

This core range has been created to work across cask, keg or small pack, although not all of the beers created are available in all formats as some styles just don't work as well in keg as cask and vice versa.

'Cask beer, whether hazy or clear, is a unique product that deserves to remain in bars across the country'

Cask slipped back in some people's awareness only now to be slowly reawakening with the availability of incredible new hops, and consumers' acceptance of the 'cloudy' pint. Until fairly recently, the main way people judged whether a beer was good or bad was its clarity, even to the extent of sending a beer back without ever smelling or tasting it.

Most customers are now far more accepting of the 'hazy' cask beer. This acceptance has made cask more interesting to those breweries who traditionally produced only hazy keg beers. They can now create a cask beer that fits with their brand profile rather than something that stands out like a sore thumb. Cask beer, whether hazy or clear, is a unique product that deserves to remain in bars across the country. Any innovation that can keep cask relevant can

only be a good thing. Hop flavour and aroma is no longer reserved for 'craft' keg. Just taste and smell some of the amazing cask beers available at your best local pub/bar/taproom and you will soon see that cask is 100% relevant in 2025.

Since they started brewing the beer scene has changed considerably. Where once there were very few breweries pushing the boundaries, there are now a huge number all over the country (and world). Most people were fiercely loyal not only to a local brewery but also to a specific beer, now a lot of people are constantly seeking the next 'big' thing.

Hop Kettle, as well as most breweries still have very loyal customers who love one specific beer and will only ever order that. Possibly trying something similar when released, but likely returning to their usual for the next pint. They are open to exploring new beers and styles on every visit, with nothing they look forward to more than the next new beer appearing on the cask hand pull or keg font.

Hop Kettle Brewery was born out of the traditional cask beer market. The first three beers: *COB (Cricklade Ordinary Bitter)*, *North Wall (Best Bitter)*, and *Element (Pale Ale)* were set as core products, they were all cask and are all still on sale today. *Element* is still their biggest selling beer and is, without doubt, the beer in our range with the fiercest loyalty. Over

the last 12 years they've created a core and seasonal core range of cask

and keg beers totalling an impressive 27.

For Hop Kettle Brewery, 2025 is a year of further innovation. Whilst they'll be continuing to produce their best sellers and the beers that made their name in the local marketplace. They're also going to be pausing a few beers in the range to allow their fantastic brewers space to innovate and produce a wider variety of exciting 'one-off' beers and styles in cask and keg to satisfy the demand of their trade customers and drinkers in their own bars.

Why not send in feedback if you have any suggestions of what you would like to see, even something from our archives? Hop Kettle would like to extend a huge thank you for your continued support. There are exciting times ahead!



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- 2 They can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal, forward or back.
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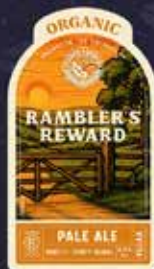
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There's a Story here somewhere

What do you think these two well known puppet characters are saying to each other?

Our thanks go to Dereck at the tap room of Hartland's Cider for the use of this interesting(!) image.



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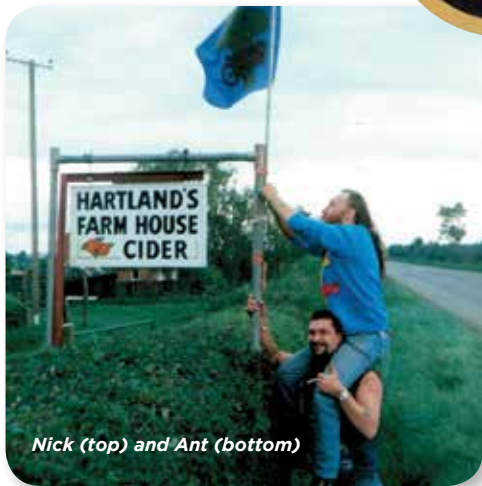
Tall Tales from the Cider Shed...

Back in the good old days, there was always a big event that took place every August Bank Holiday at Flat Farm. It was the Sidecar Rally. For years, motorbikes and sidecars gathered at the farm to eat drink and be merry.

The event always seemed to come at a good time of year for us. The Haymaking was nearly always finished and the cidermaking was still a few weeks away from starting.

We always looked forward to meeting up with our old friends. Some, like Andrew and Mary from Leicester and Lee and Lin from Bournemouth, have remained lifelong friends for over 40 years. As in all walks of life, there were plenty of characters, one of which I remember being called Skippy, not because he came from Australia but because he once rode his motorbike into a skip on the way back from the pub!

Although the motorcyclists came from all over the country, the majority of them came from the Midlands, with a lot coming from the 'Boring Old Fartz' Motorcycle Club. A couple of their



Nick (top) and Ant (bottom)

members I remember fondly were Ant and Nick. Ant was a giant of a man who rode a trike and he always tried to get me to ride on the back of that trike, which I always declined. I had never ridden pillion on the back of a motorcycle before but all that changed after a few pints in The Greyhound one night. Ant was there as well and he finally persuaded me to climb onto the back of his trike. Expecting him to go like a bat out of hell, he actually went very serenely up Lime Street and what started out as being a very frightening experience turned out to be very enjoyable.

Nick was the musician. Every evening, people would sit around the barn listening to him playing his guitar. He had lost part of his leg in an accident and as he sang his songs you couldn't help but notice that he had a tattoo on that leg saying 'Lost in

Brum'. He used to sing humorous songs about Honda Goldwings and Citroen, 2CVs, and a lot of others - the song I liked him singing was his version of Ralph McTell's 'Streets of London', where he changed some of the lyrics to 'Let me take you by the hand and lead you through the streets of Tirley, I'll show you cider that'll make you change your mind'. I'm still waiting for 'The Streets of Tirley' to be released as a single.

Last, but not least of the characters was Neil, who was Lee's father. For the week of the rally, Neil was in charge, waiting for me every morning to help me feed the cattle and



helping to serve the bikers with their cider and perry when I wasn't around.

Everyone liked Neil. The only trouble was, he didn't enjoy the best of health and one year, he didn't feel well enough to ride his sidecar back to Bournemouth. So the lads came up with a cunning plan. They took the main jet out of his sidecar's carburettor so it wouldn't start. They then rang the recovery man to see if he could get it to go, which of course he couldn't. So he had to load Neil's sidecar onto the back of the recovery lorry and Neil got a lift back to Bournemouth with a main jet in his pocket. Everyone waved Neil goodbye as he left the farm. Sadly, I think that was the last time I ever saw him

For a few years the event got even bigger with up to 250 units. It was known as the Federation of Sidecar Clubs' Annual Rally, making it the biggest rally in the country. They had their own big marquee, and their own caterers who came all the way from Doncaster. We used to go to the marquee at night and watch as the campers tried to climb the poles in the middle of the marquee in the fastest time.

But having more people meant having more toilets, with Deputy having to fill in the cesspit with the bucket on father's tractor, and



Yours Truly with Neil (front)

managing to get the tractor stuck in the pit not once but twice, meaning father had to pull him out twice with another tractor. No doubt much to his delight!

By the time we moved to Tirley Villa In 1994, the rallies were beginning to get smaller. Andrew and Mary ran a few more with a lot of the old gang turning up, but they gradually dwindled out and eventually came to an end.

Sadly, the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer with the sidecars were over and all that was left where the memories.

Dereck Hartland



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The Pub Whisperer

In a series about local pub life entitled 'The Pub Whisperer', we're looking out for readers to make contributions to the series, even if they're new to writing. Here we drop in on various pubs around the county as the journey continues...

The Perfect Inclusive Pub

It's Saturday and this busy back street pub is busy. All tables are filled, with most people drinking the wide range of ales and only a handful eating from the interesting and varied menu. The chatter is loud, and the crash of glasses being inserted into the dishwasher adds to the general jolly atmosphere. There are some sat at the bar, a couple of groups sat on the stools beneath the TV and both window tables adjacent to the front door are occupied. One couple enjoy fish and chips and ham terrine with chutney. Another crash of glasses as they are rescued from the hot dishwasher and chinking as they are returned to their temporary home before being employed to be filled with delicious and intoxicating ales. There is the occasional glass of white wine, but most glasses are filled with golden ales. Regulars welcome one another as they arrive for some beery sustenance. Some stand by the windows as the summer sun permeates the pub casting shadows and sunbeams on the happy throng. An occasional dog lies or sits quietly knowing they are in for a long session.

At the darker end of the pub the four tables are again full of groups enjoying each other's company and the odd one finishing a

replete dinner. A group of women celebrating a wedding the next day sat round a large table at one end of the pub and enjoy champagne and sing songs.

The dining room - snug - has two of its four tables occupied and they are able to have relatively quieter engagement. It's been a day of showers, and nobody is sitting out the front or in the back yard which may account for the warm jolly, pleasant atmosphere inside.

Another group arrive and no doubt they will enjoy this popular pub that does not

rely on music to engender its pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere. It's a great local boozier that is also a destination pub famous for its excellent pub atmosphere. It is a traditional and much appreciated pub; another three drinkers arrive and immediately peruse the available ales and get into a discussion with the knowledgeable female staff about each ale on offer. A perfect pub.

First day of the Cheltenham Cricket Festival

A regular told us to grab a table quickly as the Cricket Festival had started in this festival town. It was busy with chatter dominating although the staff were kind enough to turn

down the loud music in our corner. Groups entered and left regularly and there were four staff looking exceedingly busy and adding to the level of chatter by calling across each other and the bar to check on drinks; the chink of glasses by the dishwasher was constant. Here was another Cheltenham festival being enacted in a popular local backstreet pub. Every corner of the pub is occupied by louder voices than a normal weekend. Lots of real ale drinkers are among their number with people standing throughout the pub, but the dining room snug is unoccupied with no reserve tables. The backyard is busy under the umbrellas to shelter from the rain. It is cricket festival after all and another gang of more than a dozen 30+ year old men enter saying "I'm just

following the others not knowing where they are going." The staff take a deep breath as they try pace themselves for a long busy session. They pour two drinks at a time to speed up the operation behind the bar with staff sliding smoothly but quickly past each other to cope with another influx. Will it ever calm the down? At least the kitchen is quiet for these are drinkers not foodies.

There are over 80 people on the pub premises with at least 40 out the back, 20 out front and 20 in the main pub. The three staff serve drinks, take orders for food, collect and clean glasses as well as serving ale. It appears to be never ending, but from time to time they have joke with one another and the warmth between them is obvious. They are very experienced and work hard to ensure the pub works for its drinkers with the never-ending demands of respectful cricket lovers.

Radical Changes for the Festival

We were told on Sunday that the pub would be busy on the evening before the start of the Festival. However they reserved a table for us. When we arrived at just gone 5pm the staff informed us that we would have to eat upstairs as they were not serving food in the bar this week. All high stools had been removed from the bar and they were anticipating packed sessions. A couple of

Irish groups were obviously present but one went upstairs to eat. By 7pm the bar only had a dozen or so drinkers with one noisy group amongst them. The restaurant upstairs was fully booked. We were told that as it was not very busy so we could eat in the bar. Is this an indicator that due to a poor economy this year's Festival will be a low key one?

An escape from noisy Friday pubs

It's a quiet Friday evening a week after the races. Five well-built lads sit in the corner of the main bar and an elderly couple next to them. Three lads sit on stools in the corner and the landlord and a bar worker's relative sits at the bar. The level of chatter is minimal. Is this due to the fact the guv'nor is here

and they all understand that this pub does not welcome loud groups? Even the music is muted. A regular joins the group in the corner with a ten-year-old and is welcomed by the group. It's a welcoming atmosphere and a pleasant place to drink because everyone respects the pub culture.

Incongruous Trippers

It's the 2nd December on Saturday night about 6.30pm and a group of blokes with one woman are enjoying a drink in the main bar and have put on some music from the traditional juke box. They laugh loudly and call out songs to be put on and they all begin to join in partly dancing, pretending to strum guitars and jiggling. It's two degrees below outside and some wear shorts. The guv'nor asks them to quiet down, as there are other customers to consider, and they reply that it's Christmas and they continue. The group start to sing tapping their feet and dancing. The guv'nor says he's had words but it's the silly season. Then the music stops. They all start to kiss each other goodbye and suddenly most of them are gone like a spirit in the night. Three men stay and try to continue the dance session, but gradually the moves die away and the dance floor gradually returns to its main use as a friendly bar where people chat and enjoy a quiet pint.

'They pour two drinks at a time to speed up the operation behind the bar'

'There is the occasional glass of white wine, but most glasses are filled with golden ales'



CIDER & PERRY MAN



In this series, the cider representative for Cheltenham CAMRA keeps us up to speed in the world of cider and perry in and around Gloucestershire...

TRIPPING around the COUNTIES?

They say that you are never too old to keep learning! In my quest for more cidery knowledge, earlier in the year I heard of Craft Con, the annual conference organized by The Three Counties Cider and Perry Association.

This was to be held in Hereford at The Green Dragon Hotel, so I sent off for details, it was not only quite an expensive event to attend, but also more technical, and aimed at producers, which proved to be correct. There was an extra spin off, however, since I was now on the wavelength of Gabe Cook, the author and expert on cider, who lives in Herefordshire and was playing a major part in the conference.

Gabe had decided to organize an extra event on the day after the festival, which was to be a small local tour of three high quality local producers, so I wasted no time in signing up for it. There were 14 other enthusiasts present with several from as far away as Eastern Europe. Whilst our commodious coach was weaving it's way out of Hereford, Gabe gave us a comprehensive guide to cider making in the county before we arrived at our first stop Townsends at

Stretton Grandison, which is halfway to Ledbury. This was originally, and still is a fruit farm. However, Jamie, the son in law of the owner, had already enjoyed a business career with Neals Yard, marketing cheese in London, and welcomed the chance to expand the horizon for Townsends. That was nearly ten years ago and in that time they have planted a lot more cider apple trees and now have a growing cider business including higher quality production of 75cl bottles with natural (Pet Nat) fermentation.

Our next stop was way out in the lovely countryside near Bromyard, at Little Pomona. This is another relatively new business, being set up by Susanna Forbes and her husband James, less than ten years ago. Susanna had a background of marketing, and writing in the drinks industry, but fell in love with cider and rural Herefordshire. Their range is certainly different and at the top end of the market, with all sorts of blendings including grapes and beers, and much of the production is matured in reused oak barrels, before being bottled, again in 75cl size. Not unsurprisingly, bottle prices tend to be much the same as fine wine.

Our third and final stop was at Oliver's Cider and Perry Company, back near Stretton Grandison (pictured below). Tom Oliver must really be the guru, of all the Herefordshire makers. His business is all about blending, and includes the difficult art of making perry as well as some keeved (French style) production. He is also a man of many parts being until recently the leader of his own musical group. The quirky premises are in original old farm buildings which have been added to over the years. I managed to purchase a couple of bottles inscribed Cheddar on My Mind, which I hope to open for a little cidery tasting with friends shortly. I also bought a small bottle of Pomméau, which is a fortified cider blend (19%) and which had been made in conjunction with a distillery in Ludlow. I had been wanting to visit Oliver's for some time and it certainly made a fitting end to a really remarkable day out.

Events, like London buses, often come in pairs, so that not long after my Herefordshire trip, I was off down to Torquay for The CAMRA AGM and Members weekend. This was a first for me, and apart from selling the location to my wife for an interesting weekend away, I was also keen to join in with the emphasis on the anniversary of CAMRA's 50th cider and perry involvement, which was to be an important part. There were two seminars planned for both the Friday and Saturday nights, being each two hours duration, but with a presentation and tasting from seven different makers.

This was quite a contrast to my Herefordshire trip in that the event was held in an enormous conference centre, with the main room being available for a very large selection of local beers and ciders, which the hundreds of delegates could enjoy, as if at a Beer Festival. My two seminars were also different in that most of the makers were at the smaller scale of production and could probably be termed as artisan makers. The one larger maker was Sam's Cider from Winkleigh, near Crediton, who have an interesting history. They originally traded under the better known name of Inch's Cider, but got taken over by

Bulmers, who now produce it in Hereford under that name. Some of the original key employees didn't want to move to Hereford, and managed to reach agreement with Bulmers to set up business in their original premises but under a new name. They chose Sam, who was the original founder of Inches. I have been to Winkleigh, where they have a large café and a nice little shop with a full range of all their different ciders, and they even have Cider Cake for sale!

Back to Gloucestershire and present time, where we are about to judge the Cider Pub of the Year for our county. There are just three candidates chosen, since regrettably three of our six areas could not find a suitable candidate. However the winner will certainly be offering a very good range of different crafted ciders and perry's, which I shall be pleased to report on in the next edition.

Guy Vowles

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PODGY TICKER?

THE CONTINUING TALES OF A BEER COLLECTOR

An article about alcohol-free beer in a CAMRA magazine? Changing times indeed. Here you go then, all you need to know about AF beers...

If you find yourself in a pub, but want to go easy on the alcohol, do you choose a soft drink or an alcohol free (AF) beer?

An estimated 85% of pubs now offer at least one AF beer and it is definitely a growing market with sales more than tripled in the last five years. But are they any good and how on earth are they made in the first place?

Let's start with the terminology. When is a beer alcohol free (AF) and when is it low alcohol (LA)? This is, unfortunately, not as straightforward as you might imagine. UK Government guidance says AF beers may contain up to 0.05% alcohol by volume and LA beers should not be more than 1.2%.

This guidance, however, is only voluntary on the part of the producer so many will label as alcohol-free, beers up to 0.5% ABV.

So, you've taken the plunge and ordered a pint of an AF beer. But how was it brewed? Did they brew a normal beer and then remove the alcohol or is there some other alchemy at work?

Let's start with the methods which do not involve removing alcohol. The simplest is to add water to a beer brewed in the normal way. Keep on diluting until the required ABV is reached! It doesn't take a genius to work out that this will generally result in a

very disappointing drink. Another method is to brew as normal, but limit the extent of fermentation either by adjusting the recipe so there are fewer fermentable sugars or by using special yeast strains that turn less sugar into alcohol. A similar effect can be produced by inactivating the yeast and thus stopping fermentation during a brew - this is achieved

by lowering the temperature drastically. These methods are much more successful than dilution, but require a lot of skill and technique from an experienced brewer to pull off an AF beer with the sort of complexity of flavour that full fermentation would achieve.

A common way

many brewers use to produce an AF beer is to brew as normal and then remove the alcohol - it is known as dealcoholisation. There are three main ways this is done: steam distillation, vacuum distillation or reverse osmosis. Alcohol has a lower boiling point than water, so steam distillation can remove much of the alcohol. However, the high temperature has the potential to seriously affect the quality by also boiling off many of the aromatic compounds which constitute the beer's flavour. Vacuum distillation is an improvement. It involves distillation at a high pressure, so that lower temperatures are required, which has a



less detrimental effect on flavour. The final method is probably the one that affects the beer's flavour least of all, but is quite tricky and involves investment in very expensive equipment. Reverse osmosis involves passing the beer through a sophisticated semi-permeable membrane, which will allow the alcohol molecules to pass through, but not the much larger flavour molecules.

I was lucky enough to grab a few minutes with Pietro Lovato, who has been head brewer at Gloucester Brewery since 2019. He impressed me with his knowledge, his passion for the brewing process and a desire to create the best product possible. He explained that at Gloucester, reverse osmosis (the Rolls Royce of AF methods if you like!) is just prohibitively expensive and distillation just wouldn't give enough flavour, so they have spent a long time practising and perfecting a technique that works for them. He uses a particular yeast strain which will only ferment some of the fermentable sugars in the wort, mashes at a higher temperature than normal and includes a late dry hopping. He had to be prepared to throw away many failed attempts, before coming up with a series of processes that will result in a beer he is happy with.

Most big brand names have an AF version. You won't have to go far to find AF versions of Brewdog, Leffe, Erdinger or Guinness. Some of these taste almost as good as their full ABV sisters. As a collector, I am more interested in looking out for AF beers from smaller brewers and most definitely would like something on tap, since that has been the basis of my collecting for over thirty years.

Most of the time, finding a draught version of an AF beer from a smaller independent brewery is like stumbling upon a fossil on the beach. If you do come across one, then it will almost certainly be served from a keg font. Cask AF beers are even rarer than fossils! This is almost certainly down to the fact that an AF beer will need to be on the bar for longer, so requires the longer shelf life that a keg will provide.

Gloucester Brewery's recently released AF beer is

PODGY TICKER?

THE CONTINUING TALES OF A BEER COLLECTOR

Zero Gravity (0.5%). I have yet to taste this on draught, but out of a can it is a testament to the work Pietro and his team have put into it. It is a hazy pale ale and I found it full of flavour with plenty of citrus from the Citra and Galaxy hops and a bitterness which is sometimes lacking from AF brews. Bristol Beer Factory's Clear Head is another good example, although some may find it sweeter than they would like. It is described as a juicy crushable IPA and is 0.5% as most tend to be. If you would prefer a lager beer, then Wiper and True's Tomorrow (0.5%) is also a good one. Good Chemistry also chose the name Zero Gravity for their AF beer (0.5%). This is also a citrus-led pale ale, another good shout if you can find it. I must admit to being a bit disappointed by the flavour of Arbor's Wish You Were Beer (also 0.5%), although it definitely wins the award for the best name!

Nirvana started in London in 2016 and have produced a wide range of AF brews, including Pils, Lemon Lager, Helles, Hefeweizen, Hoppy IPA and a stout. Their beers, though, rarely find their way out to our neck of the woods. Big Drop, who brew in Suffolk, is another AF specialist and you are much more likely to come across some of its brews, since supermarkets often stock its cans and even local pubs will occasionally have one of its beers on draught. The most common Big Drop beers you will find are



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Pine Trail Pale Ale, Paradiso Citra IPA and Galactic Milk Stout. These are better on tap than from a can, in my opinion. You may even come across something a little more unusual from Big Drop, as they brew probably the widest range of different AF beers, including a brown ale, coconut stout, elderflower IPA and a pastry sour! Drop Bear (Swansea) is another brewery that focuses on AF beers and you may find cans locally, although I have not yet managed to collect a draught beer of theirs. BRULO, based in Edinburgh, is one of the few breweries that produce a range of AF beers that are listed as 0.0%, rather than the more usual 0.5%. I collected BRULO's IPA called Lust For Life on a trip to London and it was a very tasty beer with plenty of flavour. I have not seen BRULO beers anywhere locally, however. Lastly, I should point you in the direction of Below Brew Co., based in Bath. They started life as Lowtide back in 2021 and only recently rebranded. I have had three draught AF beers from them, all of which have been really good. The best was Wild Juice Chase (0.5%), which I collected at the Dragon Inn in Worcester, but the Strand in Cheltenham has had beers from them on tap too.

Next, a brief word on price. You should certainly not anticipate seeing a reduction in price alongside the reduction in ABV! Indeed, you may find that an AF beer costs slightly more than its 4% next-door neighbour. This is inevitable, I'm afraid, when you consider the process the brewer had to go through to finally end up with a decent AF brew. Hopefully, as more brewers get on the



bandwagon and more drinkers choose AF alternatives, costs and prices will come down - but it will probably only be by a bit!

While writing this article I have found myself contemplating the very nature of alcohol. Steady on, I hear you say, but stick with me if you can. I certainly think we should all be applauding the efforts that brewers like Pietro Lovato at Gloucester have gone to in striving for a decent AF brew. Surely the world would be a better place with more AF beer in it - as long as that beer is equal in quality to an equivalent full-strength beer, of course. After all, it isn't the alcohol content that drives me to be a beer drinker - it's the taste! I would love to be able to turn up at a beer festival, taste thirty different new beers, then drive home with no expectation of a fuzzy head the next day! Who knows, maybe at some point a future government will decide to set those limits for us by restricting the ABV of all drinks sold! Maybe I've gone too far there. (I think you're right! - Ed.)

Anyway, that concludes my quick trip round the world of AF beer. Hopefully, you've been encouraged to take the plunge - or at least you are now armed with enough technical knowledge to be able to explain why you prefer brews that are session strength or more - for the time being at least. Mine's a half of that imperial stout along the bar, please.

Pete Searle



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BUTFORD ORGANICS CIDER & PERRIES	BODENHAM HEREFORD	10% OFF WEEKEND SHOP PURCHASES (MIN £20 SPEND)	
THE CANTERBURY	TEWKESBURY	10% OFF REAL ALES	
THE NOTTINGHAM ARMS	TEWKESBURY	30P OFF REAL ALES, MON & TUES	
THE PRINCE ALBERT	STROUD	20P OFF REAL ALES	

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6 DAY PER WEEK DELIVERY WITHIN 20 MILES
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GLOUCESTER BREWERY

WAREHOUSE 4

PREMIER ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

GLOUCESTER'S PREMIER ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

MON - THURS: 12PM - 11PM | FRI - SAT: 12PM - 11.30PM | SUN: 12PM - 10PM

Right on Gloucester Quays, Warehouse 4 is the home of Gloucester Brewery and your go-to for fresh, award-winning beers brewed on-site. Head to the main bar or try Gloucestershire's only self-serve beer wall on the mezzanine.

Cocktail lover? Our bar's stocked with Fox's Kiln spirits, all distilled on-site and perfectly paired with premium mixers.

With a buzzing events calendar and private hire available, it's the perfect spot for a big night out or special celebration.

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WAREHOUSE 4, WEST QUAY, THE DOCKS, GLOUCESTER GL1 2LG

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