

FREE

HERTFORDSHIRE'S

# Pints of View

The bi-monthly publication for every discerning drinker



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## The Vegan pint and point of display information

As long ago as 2016 during an interview about the launch of the CAMRA **Good Beer Guide** Roger Protz, its then editor was misquoted in the press as saying that CAMRA was against the use of finings in beer. The launch press release made it clear (excuse the pun) that some brewers were questioning the use of isinglass made from fish bladders. This was not only because vegetarians and vegans objected to its use but that they believed that using finings strips flavour from the beer, as it not only takes yeast but also some of the proteins to the bottom of the cask. Brewers were not using other forms of finings such as silica or Irish moss, which as non-animal products are an acceptable alternative, and Nottingham University at the time were analysing whether a new form of finings derived from hops would work successfully.

Isinglass is without any doubt the most effective fining product and is completely odourless, and does not remain in the beer as the finings stay at the bottom of the cask. The secondary fermentation carries on as normal and a beautifully clear polished pint can be served. The brewers that Roger was referring to are producing what they advertise as vegetarian or vegan beers which should not come into contact with any animal products. While I can understand the intention, I do not understand why they cannot sell their beers in normal vented casks, as finings only speed up the process of beer dropping bright. Instead they use Key Kegs which keep the beer separate from the normal atmosphere and oxygen, and cannot be vented properly. Key Kegs were never intended to be used for beer and were originally used for wine and soft drinks, and vary in volume from 10 to 30 litres. The beer is put into a collapsible sphere inside a rigid plastic container, gas is then applied which causes the beer (which it never comes in contact with) to be forced to the point of dispense. If the beer in the sphere is naturally conditioned the sediment will be disturbed and the beer will be delivered cloudy at the point of dispense. As Key Kegs cannot be vented a handpump cannot be used so the beer is dispensed through Keg fonts, which can be most misleading.

The brewers of these vegan/vegetarian beers claim to set the ethical benchmark so why do they use an environmentally unfriendly contraption like Key Keg to serve their beers? Key Kegs are non-returnable and their size makes them hard to recycle as the sphere has to be removed from the plastic container. A proper vented returnable reusable cask must be the environmentally better option and serve the beer in

a more natural manner. The problem is our vegan/veggie brewers know they are selling to low turn-over outlets with bad if not non-existent cellar conditions and cellarmanship, so although they take the hard option with beer production, they take every shortcut possible when it comes to dispense. The other bonus is that as the atmosphere, and most importantly oxygen, is kept away from the beer the shelf life is extended from days to weeks.

The other problem with a throwaway container is cost - who pays? Of course, it is you the customer, and this goes some way to explaining why so-called craft keg beers are more expensive than real ales. Disposal of Key Kegs is a problem as gas may be trapped inside so they should not be crushed. Brewers' yeast is a laxative and something I don't want floating around in my pint. Vegetarian and vegan beers do not need to be cloudy as the beer, if brewed properly, will clear naturally in the cask, though it may take up to 48 hours.

The final problem is point of dispense information. As the customer cannot tell the difference between a Keg Tap and one serving Key Keg naturally conditioned beer, we have to rely on the honesty of the vendor. We are now also getting un-fined beers being served through hand-pumps so this signage should apply to pump clips as well. It is crucial that customers get what they want, if for no other reason than you don't want to get into an argument about whether the beer you have ordered should be cloudy or not. A symbol or even the word cloudy on the dispense equipment would clearly remove any confusion, but unfortunately CAMRA has fudged the issue by suggesting that the information should be displayed on a voluntary basis. This is OK when dealing with an honest broker but it is obvious that the unscrupulous can cover up bad brewing process and poor cellarmanship by ignoring these guidelines. We are now in danger of returning to the bad old days of being offered a murky pint and told that it ought to be that way.

*Steve Bury*

**Hertfordshire's Pints of View** is produced by the Herts & Essex Borders, North, South Hertfordshire and Watford & District Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches.

## Attention all CAMRA members - Your CAMRA branch membership and the GDPR

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect in May 2018 and will continue to be law following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The GDPR was established to harmonise data protection laws across Europe while helping EU citizens to better understand how their personal information was/is being used.

Unless you have consented otherwise to receive mail-outs from your local branch since the regulations came into effect, it is possible you may not be receiving information by letter or e-mail from your local CAMRA branch about branch activities such as meetings, brewery trips, beer festivals and other branch campaigning events that you might well have expected as a member to hear about. After all many who join an organisation would probably assume and expect to be part of all if it and hear automatically from their local branch/region especially if there are no additional subscriptions or fees for these mail-outs. CAMRA nationally however, say GDPR may consider branch mailings, except those informing of a branch AGM (which are allowed under GDPR) to be marketing. Currently the law states that marketing by e-mail or letter is prohibited under GDPR unless a member proactively agrees to receive such mailings.

The way round this is for members to determine exactly what they wish to receive from CAMRA by setting their own preferences, which of course can be changed at any time. The easily navigable section online on the CAMRA website also allows members to also update their other membership preferences too such as e-mail address, postal address and other information held by CAMRA. To do this you will need to spend a minute or two logging onto to CAMRA's website. Should you decide to do so make sure you have with you your membership number found on the front of your card:

This is what you need to do.

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3. Click My Membership and then Edit My Membership Details
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tabs too. Especially that your e-mail and address are up to date.

5. Add: <https://camra.org.uk/my-membership/edit/> to your Internet favourites so you can log on quickly and change your preferences in the future.

If you don't use e-mail or the web but still want to update your preferences please get in touch with the helpful membership team at CAMRA HQ who will be happy to advise what you should do. Email: [Membership@CAMRA.org.uk](mailto:Membership@CAMRA.org.uk) or telephone 01727 867201

See also notice on back page

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## Regulator rules against Marston's

The Pub Code adjudicator has ruled that Marston's PLC, one of the U.K.'s largest breweries and pub landlords, has been deceiving its tenants about the amount of beer in the brewery's barrels, potentially voiding its tenancy contracts and opening it up to thousands of lawsuits. The regulators ruling found that Marston's has been selling casks to its pubs claiming there were 72 pints of beer inside, despite knowing that around 5% of the contents was unsaleable yeast and sediment. Marston's calculates its rent according to how much beer a pub should sell, which means it is charging publicans twice over for "pints" that will never exist.

This should be a huge victory for Britain's 12,000 tied pubs, and it is hoped that it will help publicans secure better rental agreements as well as offer the chance for those whose businesses failed to recoup some of their losses through the courts.

The shortfall was uncovered during a case lodged in 2016 by the Marston's tenant Edward Anderson to the Pubs Code Adjudicator challenging a rent review at the **Railway Inn** in Cheltenham.

James Edwards, Marston's pubs code compliance officer, says that the "very complex case" includes "two very different aspects", but declined to elaborate what those aspects were or the specifics of their complexity. He notes that Marston's doesn't agree with how events and details were interpreted and presented by the Pubs Code Adjudicator, but also didn't explain what that meant either. He added "It's important to recognize Anderson's pub remains in occupation and continues to be a successfully run Marston's pubs on MRO (market rent only) terms."

By law, a brewery landlord must tell publicans exactly how much beer is in a barrel so they can price their beer correctly. In its rent calculations, Marston's claimed there were 72 pints of beer in each cask, but made no adjustments to account for undrinkable sediment volumes, despite the fact that it calculated those quantities accurately when writing them off in tax payments to Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Tracking exactly how much sediment is left in each barrel is tough for publicans because of varying wastage levels from line cleanings and spillages, but Marston's had to show its hand when it was forced to give those figures during arbitration. It revealed that up to 8% was unsaleable sediment, depending on the beer in question. The brewery's most popular beer,

*Pedigree*, typically clocks in at around 5.3%, just short of 4 pints, of sediment around £15.60 worth of beer over the bar.

Pubs Code Adjudicator Paul Newby in his ruling said the 2.5% wastage allowance given on cask beer by Marston's was "inappropriate and inadequate" and "whether intentionally or not," Marston's had breached the Pubs Code by basing its rent and pricing on this calculation.

A Vianet study of U.K. cask quality in 2016 found that pubs were losing an estimated £111.9m a year in profit, based on 2% wastage. If 5% of that same cask is also undrinkable, the losses to tied pubs could be almost triple

that, and is a key reason why around 13,000 British pubs have closed since 2001.

Marston's operates around 400 tenanted pubs, all rented according to their potential barrel sales. Each one can now challenge their rental agreements, tangling Marston's in legal disputes, and could cost millions in rent reductions. This is PPI for pubs and the brewers may not have the money to pay their way out of it.

It is clear that Marston's are not the only pub company that is giving its tenants short measure, records show that Star Pubs & Bars (owned by Heineken) and Shepherd Neame Brewery have also done so in the past. The prospect of having to compensate large numbers of tenants won't please the new foreign investors, like Stonegate Pub Company, which bought Ei Group for £1.3 billion, or Hong Kong property company CKA, which bought Greene King for £2.7 billion.

At a local level how have publicans been making up the shortfall in their barrels, which also includes losses when pipe cleaning and pull throughs at the start of a session? There is a lot of equipment in pubs now that monitors beer sold, such as flow meters between the barrel and the point of dispense, so a simple way to make up any discrepancies is to give short measure.

Tom Stainer, CAMRA Chief Executive said:

"We welcome this arbitration ruling from the Pubs Code Adjudicator on 5<sup>th</sup> December. CAMRA has always maintained that supplying cask beer to tenants based on the premise of 72 saleable pints per cask is a bad business practice used by pub companies to extract extra profit from their tenants. This ruling also recognises the realities and skill involved in keeping cask ale in excellent condition.





Pressure on licensees to sell as many pints as possible from a barrel of cask beer can result in a bad quality pint for the consumer.

Pub companies of all sizes need to ensure that they take notice of this ruling when calculating tied rents from now on. This will go some way to further redressing the imbalance between tied tenants and their pub companies, and also improve the quality of cask ale served across the UK.

In another case at the end of 2019 against Enterprise Inns (Ei) two of their tenants Gary Murphy and Dave Mountfield highlighted that the pub code was being misinterpreted by the pubco and the regulator. Pub tenants' rents are not allowed to be increased during Market Rent Only (MRO) negotiations, which should have made the pubcos deal with cases more promptly. Some cases have lasted over two years and there has been at least one claim of a publican going bankrupt whilst waiting for resolution. Following legal advice Ei capitulated and has told its tenants affected that they will receive a full refund.

Fiona Dickie who will be the Senior Adjudicator when Paul Newby stands down and is replaced in March, visited the **Robin Hood Beer and Cider Festival** in Nottingham as CAMRA's guest. Following this she criticised CAMRA for highlighting Gary Murphy and Dave Mountfield's cases in their publications, saying that the PCA office didn't have the resources to deal with complaints from activists. Bizarrely the PCA (Pub Code Adjudicator) then claimed credit for exposing the rent problem that the PCA and Ei had been forced into recognising by the tenants campaign.

Who knows? We may get a period of parliamentary stability which could mean the review of the Pubs Code moves up the agenda in 2020.

Steve Bury

## Chiltern Brewery raises £500 for WheelPower

The Chiltern Brewery have announced that their limited-edition Rugby World Cup Beer, *Chiltern Wheeling*, has raised £500 for local charity WheelPower.

Chiltern Brewery was available throughout the 2019 Rugby World Cup and Chiltern Brewery pledged to donate 5p from every pint sold to WheelPower, headquartered at Stoke Mandeville Stadium. "Being only a few miles away we have always been great admirers of the work WheelPower



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do, so to be able to support them in their fundraising efforts has been a real privilege" said Tom Jenkinson, Head Brewer at The Chiltern Brewery. WheelPower have been providing opportunities in sport for people with physical impairments for nearly 70 years. Based in Stoke Mandeville, the home of the Paralympic movement, WheelPower is at the heart of wheelchair sport.



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*British Wheelchair Sport*

Each year, WheelPower helps nearly 50,000 disabled people to participate in sport and activity across the country.

## Tim Martin fights off AGM challenge

**O**n the lead-up to Wetherspoon's AGM in mid-November there were disagreements between some of the company's shareholders and Chairman Tim Martin.

Tim Martin, the founder of Wetherspoon said he was "worried" about Labour Party Opposition Leader Jeremy Corbyn's approach to business at the pub group's annual general meeting, and said he is "all for" a slump in consumer confidence. "I think the country and consumers are pretty resilient and I think sometimes



people are too concerned about consumer confidence. About two years ago, the main worry was that consumers were over-confident and they were spending too much on their credit cards. That thankfully is gone, so I'm all for consumers lacking a bit of confidence."

The discord led to two of Wetherspoon's directors one being Tim Martin, to be challenged but at the AGM, shareholders voted in support of all of the firm's resolutions, backing the publication of the company's annual report.

Before the AGM, some shareholder groups had called on investors to vote against the pub firm's annual report because of its spending £95,000 on pro-Brexit materials before the 2016 referendum, claiming it broke company law.

Mr Martin replied describing "UK corporate governance laws as "up the spout" and hit out at one of the company's biggest shareholders for voting

against two board members at the pub chain's annual general meeting last year.

Wetherspoon sales were up 5.3% in the 13 weeks to October 27; one pub has been opened and four shut. Because figures were so good a £200million investment programme has been announced with between 10 and 15 new pubs being opened before July 2020. Another £6.4 million has been spent buying back company shares.

At present Wetherspoon's employs 44,000 staff to run their 875 pubs and 58 hotels.

## Dangers of cash in hand payments to employees

**T**he food, drink and hospitality trade is rife with part time employees, demanding cash in hand payments, rather than legitimate payments

through a payroll. Publicans may thus ask themselves, 'What's in it for me?' It's rare to receive an answer that justifies (how do you justify breaking the law?) paying cash in hand.

As an employer, it's your legal duty to comply with the law about paying staff, and accounting for taxes. If you have one employee that earns sufficient to mean you must operate a payroll system, and report via the RTI (Real time Information) system to HMRC, then ALL employees must be paid through the payroll system.

Even if no employees enter into this category, it's essential you know what you're obliged to do, to remain compliant. For all employees, you must have the following: -

- Full name and address
- Date of birth
- Either a P45, or a P46.

If an employee does not have a P45, it is your duty to give them a P46 to fill in and hand back to you. You must retain these documents in the employees' records, their National Insurance number and evidence of their right to work, if employing a foreign national.

Failure to obtain all of this exposes you to fines by HMRC.

Employees have many reasons for wanting to be paid cash in hand, but none of them are actually good news for you! These reasons include: -

- They are employed elsewhere, and wish to top up their income with a part time additional



income and tax deductions may make their take home pay less than they really want/need.

- They are receiving some kind of state benefit, which they would lose if they were paid legitimately.
- They may not be legally allowed to work in the UK.
- They are receiving child support from their children's other parent, which would be reduced if they had to declare it.

The first point against you is that if they are not legitimately employed, then you must not claim their wages as a tax-deductible cost within your business. That shifts the burden of tax they may be attempting to avoid paying to you! Simple arithmetic shows it's actually worth paying more, to allow you to legitimately deduct tax from them, so that they take home enough to make it worth working for you, and then allow you to claim them as a tax-deductible business expense!

Do you really want to aid and abet fraud against the state? That's the position you're in if you pay cash in hand whether they declare their reason to you or not. Some of these reasons may seem harmless, but there's always a loser if you conspire with employees!

Employing foreign workers who do not have the right

to work in the UK can lead to fines of up to £10,000 per worker.

*This article was originally published in "Beer Around Ere" the CAMRA Peterborough branch newsletter.*

## Fuller's profit or loss?

I read a strange piece in the *Metro* in December (and yes, I had not had a drink) saying that the sale of the Fuller's brewing arm for £164.5 million showed a half year pre-tax profit of £176.2 million, from £20.8 million last year. My maths shows this as a loss, as the difference between £164.5 million and £176.2million is £11.7 million £9.1 million down on last year.



*Steve Bury*

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## Beer Cloudy or Clear?

When you enter the pub and ask for a pint what do you expect, a beautiful clear drink with a decent head in a pristine glass, or a murky flat substance that reminds you of pond water? The most annoying thing is when the landlord or bar staff argue if you try and return it. This does not happen so often these days as customers are harder to come by and attitudes have changed, but I can still remember being told “don’t drink with your eyes that tastes alright”. Well actually it doesn’t and those stupid enough to drink it would pay the price later. What is floating around in your beer is brewer’s yeast either churned up from the bottom of the cask or from a barrel that has not had time to settle. Dirty pipes will leave small particles of dead yeast in your glass which are slightly harder to detect. Another line was “It’s supposed to be that way - its real ale” which of course is another falsehood put about by a bad cellarman. On occasions my reply has been “If you think it’s OK, I’ll pay for it and you drink it”, and have always got my pint changed.

Our purveyors of unwholesome pints moan that nobody drank clear beer until we started using glasses; pewter tankards and china pots cannot be seen through and there may be a modicum of truth in this as consistently clear beer was not produced until finings were introduced.

The truth is that the clear beer we drink today began with water and in this case the water of Burton-on-Trent.

Burton-on-Trent stands in a broad river valley carved out of ancient rock, covered with layers of sand and gravel up to sixty feet deep. Water has trickled through these beds for tens of thousands of years, depositing minerals in the gravel and sandstone. When you examine the mineral content with beer in mind, it’s hard to resist thoughts of divine intervention: a higher sulphate content than any other major brewing centre in the world gives Burton beer a dry, slightly sulphurous aroma known as the “Burton snatch,” and a character that was described beautifully by one Nineteenth Century writer as, “A brightly sparkling bitter, the colour of sherry and the condition of champagne”.

Burton became famous for its brewing water in the Eighteenth Century as it also has the highest calcium content of any major brewing region, the highest magnesium, and low levels of sodium bicarbonate. Evidence of brewing at Burton Abbey goes back to 1295. It is commonly accepted that beer is a delicate beverage that doesn’t enjoy rough treatment. Britain’s roads back then left a great deal to be

desired so Burton beer stayed in the local area.

In 1712 the Trent Navigation opened and Burton was now at the head of one of Britain’s most extensive navigation systems, linked to huge areas of the country, including the important ports of Hull, Liverpool and Bristol. Burton brewers bought the best quality barley from Norfolk and Suffolk, and the finest hops from Kent and Worcestershire. The resulting ale could be shipped to the booming, thirsty market in London—not to mention the rest of Europe—via Hull. Water not only sparked the foundation of the town and provided the vital ingredient for its beer; it was also the means of selling it economically everywhere else. Later the speedy distribution of Burton beers was enhanced by the railway system and so much beer was being sent to London that St Pancras station was designed so that the barrels could be unloaded between the pillars supporting the roof, to give easy access to the drays collecting it.

A shortage of oak led us to import wood for barrels from Russia and this is where finings originated, being produced from sturgeons’ bladders. The fluid when added to the beer took any small particles and of course the brewer’s yeast to the bottom of the cask. This is where the sediment would stay unless the cask was disturbed giving guaranteed clear beer, and starting a demand for Burton beer which continued for over a century.

Other brewers around the country started to emulate Burton Ales by adding gypsum and other ingredients to their local water and clear beer has continued as the norm until this day.

Steve Bury

## UK Pubs’ Top Ten Selling Cask Ales for 2019

Unfortunately, beer sales in the UK are in decline and have been so for some time. In the last year cask sales fell by 7.7% and have fallen by 23% over the last four years. So, what are the top ten best-selling cask ales and how are they faring in a shrinking market? Draw your own conclusions from the sales figures below.

1. Sharp’s *Doom Bar* - sold 5,220,200 gallons down 4.7%
2. Greene King *IPA* - sold 3,090,831 gallons - down 7.8%
3. Fuller’s *London Pride* - sold 2,216,960 gallons - down 7.8%
4. Greene King *Abbot Ale* - sold 1,806,035 gallons - up 25.7%



5. Timothy Taylor's *Landlord* - sold 1,398,322 gallons - up 11.7%
6. Thwaites *Wainwright* - sold 1,063,485 gallons - up 0.1%
7. Marston's *Pedigree* - sold 898,508 gallons - down 12.8%
8. St Austell *Tribute* - sold 891,755 gallons - up 3.7%
9. Caledonian *Deuchars IPA* - sold 680,452 gallons - down 40.5%
10. Ruddles *Best Bitter* - sold 627,330 gallons - down 1.0%

Figures above first published in the *Morning Advertiser* on 5 December 2019, and converted from Hectolitres (100 litres) to Imperial Gallons

## Herts Beers amongst Champion Beer of Britain Contenders

The competitions for CAMRA's Champion Beer of East Anglia 2020 have been held at CAMRA beer festivals across East Anglia throughout this year. It is pleasing to see 3 Brewers *Special English Ale* win Silver at the Norwich festival, and New River *Five Inch Drop* win Bronze at the Watford festival. We congratulate them both.

The overall Champion Beer of East Anglia competition will be held at the Colchester winter

festival at the end of January 2020.

The Champion Beer of Britain is CAMRA's ultimate honour for UK brewers and is awarded every year at the Trade Session of the **Great British Beer Festival**. Judging for the competition takes around a year, starting with individual nominations from CAMRA members and local and regional competitions.

### Winners by Beer Category Below

Best Bitter - judged at the Watford festival	
<b>Gold:</b>	Green Jack, <i>Trawlerboys Best Bitter</i>
<b>Joint Silver:</b>	Colchester, <i>Colchester No 1 / Grain Redwood</i>
<b>Bronze:</b>	New River, <i>Five Inch Drop</i>
Strong Bitter - judged at the Norwich festival	
<b>Gold:</b>	Fat Cat, <i>Marmalade Cat</i>
<b>Silver:</b>	3 Brewers of St Albans, <i>Special English Ale</i>
<b>Bronze:</b>	Adnams, <i>Broadside</i>
Golden Ale - judged at the St Albans festival	
<b>Gold:</b>	Grain, <i>ThreeOneSix</i>
<b>Silver:</b>	Bishop, <i>Nick Heresy</i>
<b>Bronze:</b>	Crouch Vale, <i>Brewers Gold</i>
Barley Wines / Strong Old Ales - judged at the Cambridge winter festival	
<b>Gold:</b>	Lacons, <i>Audit</i>
<b>Silver:</b>	Woodforde's, <i>Headcracker</i>
<b>Bronze:</b>	Red Fox Ruby, <i>Red Mild</i>

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## Expressing a love of Bass

by Roger Protz

You have to be a beer nut to spend one and a half hours travelling for a pint when there are 50 pubs in your home town. But I was in search of something special – Draught Bass – and I found it in the **Express Tavern** on Kew Bridge Road in West London.

My trip was prompted by the new edition of **CAMRA's Good Beer Guide**, which lists just that one pub in the whole of London serving the beer regularly. This is an astonishing discovery. When I looked at the 1989 edition of the guide, pub after pub in London offered Draught Bass, so what explains this fall from grace?

The beer was once – by far – the biggest-selling premium ale in the country. When I first started writing about beer and was asked in interviews to name my favourite beverage I answered unhesitatingly “Draught Bass”.

It's everything a good ale should be: a fine balance between rich biscuit malt and spicy and peppery English hops. At a time when so many modern beers blast your taste buds with extreme bitterness, it's a delight to sup a beer that accentuates malt as well as hops.

Draught Bass and the bottled version called Bass *Pale Ale* are direct descendants of the pale ales and India Pale Ales brewed in Burton-on-Trent in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The founder, William Bass, and his sons built a brewery that by the end of that century was the biggest in the world until it was overtaken by the rise of European lager. By 1900 Bass was producing one million barrels a year and its beers were exported throughout the world.

At its peak, 800,000 barrels of Draught Bass were brewed annually. But then in 2000 Bass sold its breweries to become a hotelier – it's now Holiday Inns – and its breweries and beers fell into the hands of the world's biggest brewer, AB InBev, best known for Budweiser and Stella Artois.

The global giant has little interest in what it calls “low volume beers”. It still owns Draught Bass but has it brewed by Marston's in Burton. It's thought production is down to around 35,000 barrels a year. This explains why the beer is so hard to find and why I made the trip to Kew Bridge. The Bass red triangle trademark adorns the exterior of the Express Tavern and the famous triangle also declares itself on a pump clip on the bar. Two regulars seated at the bar nodded in salutation when I asked for a pint. “You've

come to the right place for Bass,” they said. “That's what we're drinking.”

Good choice on their part—but how absurd that seasoned beer lovers have to travel miles to find a pub serving an ale that is now as rare as the proverbial rocking horse droppings.

The Express Tavern should be enjoyed for more than the Bass. It's a pub with a fascinating history. It started life in 1794 as a stop on a coaching route that offered an express journey from London to Bath. When coaches were replaced by trains in the 19<sup>th</sup>

Century, the inn was placed conveniently close to Kew Bridge station and continued to refresh travellers as well as locals.

It has a splendid unspoilt interior, with two bars at the front, the one to the right offering Bass. Another room at the back is set out for dining and beyond is a spacious back garden that's covered and heated in cold weather. The rooms have open fires, vast mirrors and fascinating memorabilia of the pub and the beers it has sold over the years.

There are sporting prints in the Gents, including a portrait of Bernard Bosanquet, the cricketer who in 1903 developed the ‘googly’ -- an off break bowled with a leg break action.

Draught Bass was introduced in 1921 and has never left. Earlier, in 1898 the pub was owned for a while by the Watford brewer Benskin's and one of the earliest meetings to launch CAMRA – the Campaign for Real Ale -- in London was held in the pub in 1973.

The Express has other fine cask ales, including Harvey's *Sussex Best*, Siren *Earl Grey Session Pale* and Big Smoke *Milk Stout*. It was a wrench not drinking the sublime Harvey's *Best* but the joys of Draught Bass won the day.

The good news is that you can enjoy the beer in St Albans. I knew the **Boot** in Market Place occasionally sold Draught Bass but landlord Sean Hughes tells me he plans make it available more often. So, hurry to the Boot for a pint of England's finest – but if you're ever in West London and perhaps visiting Kew Gardens, don't miss the pleasures of the Express Tavern.

RP

Roger Protz is one of the world's leading beer writers, historians, lecturers and tasters. He is the author of more than 20 books on the subject and has edited 20 editions of CAMRA's **Good Beer Guide**.





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## Watford Beer Festival – Silver Anniversary

The 25<sup>th</sup> **Watford Beer Festival** took place from Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the **West Herts Sports Club**. Around 80 beers, ciders and perries (and one mead!) were on offer for thirsty drinkers over the three days; most from smaller producers and local breweries. Proceedings took place at the West Herts Sports Club, which has also been the venue for every other Watford Beer Festival. In its early years the festival was held in the function room, with the small club bar next door for members only. More recently the club built a larger members' bar in a different part of the building, which meant the growing festival could expand into the old club bar and eventually into a marquee outside. Now it looks like things are set to change again. The club is hoping to demolish the old function room and build a new one elsewhere on the site. Certainly, the old function room is looking very tired and redevelopment is needed, but it remains to be seen whether the changes will allow the festival to continue at the club. Only time will tell.

Like other CAMRA beer festivals, the Watford Beer Festival has encountered mixed fortunes in recent years, with attendances varying unpredictably. For example, this year we had our best Friday daytime attendance, which surprisingly was followed by our worst ever Friday evening. Likewise, Saturday daytime compared well to previous years, but the evening attendance was disappointing. Naturally enough, Friday evening used to be our busiest night, but it became too crowded, which might explain why other times like Thursday night and Friday daytime have increased in popularity recently. Also, we are often at the mercy of the November weather, and some very wet conditions have probably deterred many potential customers. However, these factors don't explain why other CAMRA beer festivals are also having a bumpy time. It is possible the number of competing beer festivals, craft beer bars and brewery taprooms opening in recent years has increased competition for existing beer festivals. Since CAMRA has worked to promote rare beer styles and small breweries we may have become a victim of our own success. It's hard to complain about that, but the downside is that many new breweries and craft beer bars do not sell real ale. Many potential beer festival customers probably do not know or care about that, so CAMRA still has a job to do promoting real ale in a changing scene where kegged craft beers might be taking some of real ale's traditional market share. Whatever the cause of our fluctuating fortunes the Watford Beer

Festival continues to make a surplus, thanks to the sensible budgeting of our festival treasurer; and we continue to have funds to donate to CAMRA's campaigns.

As well as quenching the thirst of many eager beer, cider and perry drinkers the festival also hosted competitions and presentations over the three days it was open. On Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November the festival was the venue for the judging of the Best Bitter category of the **Champion Beer of Britain** competition (East Anglia Region). The winner was Green Jack *Trawlerboys*, with Grain *Redwood* and Colchester *No.1* in joint second place. Green Jack's beer will now go into the next stage of the competition, which will eventually result in the Champion Beer of Britain presentation at the **Great British Beer Festival** in August 2020. On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November we presented the certificates for the **Hertfordshire Beer of the Year 2019** competition. Judging for the competition took place at the **St Albans Beer & Cider Festival** in September. The winner this year was New River Brewery's *Five-Inch Drop*. The runner-up was Tring Brewery's *Citra Session* with Three Brewers of St. Albans' *Dark Mild* in third place.



**Pictured above:** Hertfordshire Beer of the Year award presentation. From left to right: John Bourdeaux (New River Brewery), Jeremy Alter (New River Brewery), Jared Ward-Brickett (Tring Brewery), Matt Sutton (Three Brewers of St. Albans), Mark Fanner (Three Brewers of St. Albans)

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> there was the now traditional Pub Quiz, and once again the top prize was the chance to be Brewer for a Day at Paradigm Brewery in Sarratt. Paradigm Brewery and Pope's Yard Brewery are the longest established local breweries, and both had their beers at the festival. Several new breweries have popped up in the Watford area over the last year or so. These include Bowtie Brewery and Oxhey Village Brewery, both of which started commercial



production recently and had beers available at the festival. The latter brewery even nabbed a couple of top ten spots in our Beer of the Festival competition. Paradigm Brewery grabbed both first and second places in the competition with the perennial favourite Watford Winter Warmer and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary special Imperial Black Hornet. The full top ten list is below. We look forward to the next festival next November and hope to see you all there.

1. Paradigm - *Watford Winter Warmer*
2. Paradigm - *Imperial Black Hornet*
3. XT/Animal - *Hop Kitty*
4. Tryst - *Chocolate Coconut Porter*
5. Oxhey Village Brewery - *Chocolate Porter*
6. Stealth - *Huggermuggery*
7. Fyne Ales - *Jarl*
8. Green Jack - *Trawlerboys Best Bitter*, Oxhey Village Brewery - *Milk Stout*, Tiny Rebel - *Chinook IPA*

Andrew Vaughan

## White Hart Tap, St Albans turns Twenty-one

This month (February) sees the **White Hart Tap**, probably the best pub in Keyfield Terrace, getting the key of the door. Twenty-one years ago, Steve McConnell, along with his business partner Martin Brown, took over the tenancy of the Pubmaster pub, (the pub later transferring to Punch Taverns).

Some years later Martin moved on and was replaced by Andrew Meredith, now running the nearby sister pub, the White Lion. This makes Steve the longest serving landlord in St Albans.

During the 21 years the pub has consistently kept a good range of well-kept cask ales. Fortunately, they have been allowed to supplement the pubco's offered beer list, which has allowed them to offer:

- The ever-popular Timothy Taylor *Landlord* (for which they were awarded membership of the Timothy Taylor Championship Club 3 years ago by the brewery).
- Three changing guest real ales.
- And, over the years, some of Steve's, very good, own brewed real ales.

The pub is deservedly popular with CAMRA members and is one of the Branch's foremost real ale pubs, always offering six or more real ales. In





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recognition it has been awarded **Pub of the Year** Awards, Silver in 2019 and Bronze in 2015. In 2014 it appeared on the cover of the **Good Beer Guide**. They have also run many mini beer festivals over the years, in their beer garden, with some great cask ales on.

Long may this well-run, no frills, quality establishment continue! An excellent example of the sort of pub CAMRA seeks to encourage!

Tom Savory

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## Hertfordshire's Pub Losses and Gains 2019

By Steve Bury

**N**ationally it is reported that pub losses have levelled off and could actually be static. The report below does not fully support that trend. Quite often we get the figures for licensed premises mistaken for those of pubs alone by the press, when you take restaurants off-licenses and places that sell bottled beers and ciders like Garden Centre Cafeterias, a totally false impression can be given.

What is true is that 13,000 pubs have closed since 2001.

Last year I commented that the Office of National Statistics said that the UK had 38,815 pubs in 2018 and had lost 9,700 pubs 25% since 2008. So, if pubs continued to close at the rate of 18 per week (and none are replaced) the last pub will close in 2069.

A number of lengthy campaigns are being run by locals to get pubs sold to developers re-opened, I applaud the good work done by these groups who have doggedly fought on against the odds. Several of the pubs in question have been gutted in acts of vandalism by the new owners attempting to influence planning decisions and destroy opposition. This has not worked and I wish the pub campaigning groups every success, and I invite them to keep us informed of progress so that we can support and highlight what they are doing in the newsletter.

We all know that it is the price of a pint (caused largely by an unjust tax system and pubco tied house lease arrangements) that is keeping customers out of pubs.

The message is still the same "use them or lose them".

### Pub Losses

**Aston:** **Rose & Crown** remains closed since 21 November 2015. Planning applications were submitted 23/6/17 to convert the pub and barn in to two dwellings and a micropub with five further dwellings in the grounds. These applications were refused 29/3/18 and then modified applications were submitted on 4/5/18 which were in turn refused on 29/6/18. An appeal was then lodged for each planning application and a hearing took place on 19/6/19. The appeal decision was published on 13/8/19 with all appeals being dismissed. The pub is now listed for lease with Everard Cole: <http://www.everardcole.co.uk/properties/Aston-Rose&Crown>

**Bricket Wood:** The **Old Fox**, School Lane, Old Bricket Wood closed in 2016 for urgent structural work. As far as I know it has not reopened, can someone update us please?

**Charlton:** The **Windmill** remains closed since Aug 2015 when it was sold to a developer. Since then a concerted campaign has been organised by local residents to get the pub reopened and a crowd funding appeal to buy back the pub was in POV 296. The campaigners now have the support and help of their local MP Bim Afolomi, and a meeting has now been arranged through him between the owner and campaigners. The meeting should take place at the end of January and it is hoped that the owner will consider offers from the community and others to purchase the pub, which remains in a very sorry neglected state. The share offer scheme is still open and has had a good response with over 280 people registered. This is exceptional but more pledges are still welcome and needed. just put your contact details on the web site:

[www.savethewindmillpub.com/shares.html](http://www.savethewindmillpub.com/shares.html).

As Charlton has only 30 dwellings this shows that support goes far beyond the local area. There will be another report after the meeting in the next edition. The Windmill Community Pub Ltd (WCPL) was formed as a Community Benefit Society and launched a Share registration in July 2019.

**Cheshunt:** The **Green Dragon** remains closed and up for sale.

**Colney Heath:** The **Chalkdrawers** closed May 2018. Awaiting new tenant, the pub remains boarded up.

**Elstree:** **Kiss Kiss** (previously the **East** and originally the **Plough**) is closed and boarded up. It has been rumoured that it will reopen as the **Aldenhams Arms** but after over six months nothing has happened.

**Essendon:** The **Rose & Crown** closed in 2018 with a pledge to reopen in 2019 work has been going on but no sign of reopening yet.

**Gaddesden Row:** It is reported that the **Old Chequers** closed in 2017 is still standing and has the car park blocked off.

**Haultwick:** The long-awaited plans were lodged 3<sup>rd</sup> April to do major structural works and re open the **Rest & Welcome** looked good but the council did not agree. Further discussions are underway. Update appreciated.

**Hertford:** The **Hummingbird** closed when the pub company ceased trading. Currently still closed with the future unclear.

**Kimpton:** We have been informed by the Save the **White Horse** campaign that the new owner put the pub up for sale by Dutch auction. The locals and several others bid but a guy called Ross Tomlinson won and bought the pub in September 2017. Since then the locals have been in regular contact and he

has finally submitted a pre-planning application for major structural changes to the local planners. If accepted it would mean that the **White Horse** reopens as a sort of gastro pub. No other formal planning application has been submitted since – appears in limbo.

**London Colney:** The **Golden Lion** closed Dec 2017, sold to developer who it is rumoured is trying to purchase other adjoining sites. The pub still boarded up. Any news appreciated.

**Mill Green:** The **Green Man** is closed and remains boarded up. However, planning permission has been granted to reopen as a pub with brewery by the Gascoyne Estate (the owners) but no date has been given for work to commence.

**Oxhey:** The **Happy Hour** closed Jan 2018 and has been demolished to make way for flats.

**Radlett:** The Grade II listed **Cat & Fiddle** closed again 25<sup>th</sup> August and has lease for sale signs on the outside. It has been rumoured that the Cat has had the freehold put on the market.

**Reed:** The **Cabinet** bought at auction and has had the pub interior removed for conversion to a house. This has met with a sustained campaign to get it reopened and on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018 the application for retrospective planning permission to convert to residential was dismissed. The pub was put on the market again in January 2019 with Fleurets asking £595K for the freehold. The latest position is that the Council have confirmed that the pub interior must be restored and the pub has not been sold.

**Rickmansworth:** The **Tree** is closed and shuttered, but the lease is still being advertised. The **Waterside** is now mostly used as a function venue. Opening times as a pub are limited and subject to change if there is a function, and the manager basically said he didn't regard it as a pub anymore.

**St Albans:** The **Bell** Chequer Street converted to a Jamie's Italian Restaurant (no real ale) closed May 2018. It is one of the oldest pubs in the city and remains shut. The Foragers at the **Verulam Arms** closed following bankruptcy but is likely to reopen.

**Shenley:** The **William IV** closed on 30<sup>th</sup> August after being sold to Griggs the developers. The pub has now had hoardings put up and planning permission lodged to build a detached house on part of the garden and car park. The future of the pub is not known.

**Stanborough:** The **East** (previously the **Bull**) was demolished in March to be replaced by housing.

**Thundridge:** The **Sow & Pigs** has become Maltons restaurant.

**Ware:** The **Lodge** (formerly the Wine Lodge) has

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been converted to a Mexican restaurant. The **Victoria** remains closed.

**Widford:** The **Green Man** closed early 2019, an ACV application has been successful and a planning application for conversion to residential has been lodged. This information is a year old - can I request an update?

### Pubs Saved / New Pubs

**Barley:** The **Fox & Hounds** re-opened in March as a free house following a £1m refurb.

**Borehamwood:** The **Wellington** reopened in May following a major refurbishment. The car park will become a block of flats.

**Bushey:** The **Horse & Chains** has re-opened under the same management team as the **Royal Oak** in Watford Heath.

**Croxley Green:** The **Anchor Tap & Bottle** opened in November.

**Flaunden.** The **Green Dragon**, famous for its lovely unspoilt snug which is on the CAMRA national Inventory of historic pub interiors closed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018 for a spell, but has been bought and reopened following some acceptable changes to the interior.

**Gosmore:** The freehold of the **Bull** was sold by Ei and it reopened in November.

**Hatfield:** The historic **Eight Bells** in the Old Town opened and closed several times but has now been taken over and refurbished by Farr Brewery re-opening on 29<sup>th</sup> November. The **Comet** re-opened in September as the **Element Bar and Kitchen**.

**Hemel Hempstead:** A new micro pub the **Monks Inn** is a conversion from a shop in the market square behind old bus station.

**Hertford:** The **Crafty Duck** opened initially as a pop-up micro pub but is now permanent with two real ales.

**Hitchin:** The **Bricklayers Arms** closed in March but re-opened in December.

**Knebworth:** A post made in Facebook group called 'Saved Our Station Pub, Knebworth' made on 13 January reads: "Knebworth Parish Council are pleased to confirm they have completed their purchase of the **Station Public House** and its associated coach house.

This follows a June 2019 residents' survey which showed overwhelming support for saving this valuable social asset at the heart of our community. A full refurbishment is starting today, and more details about the exciting new offer will be revealed soon.

We would like to thank everyone, including the SOS PUB group and Knebworth Estate, for their support so far".

**Potters Bar:** It has been reported that the **Green Man** could be re-opened as a pub when the garden and car park are converted to sheltered accommodation. No progress for a year.

**Radlett:** The closed **O'Sullivan's Bar** reopened in May as the **Office** under new ownership, and is selling Greene King ales.

**Rickmansworth:** The **Wishful Drinking** Tap Room opened in May. **Creative Juices** Tap Room opened in November.

**St Albans:** The **Mad Squirrel Tap** opened in Hermitage Close. A new Young's pub, the **St Albans Well**, is due to open in the old BHS premises on St Peter Street in 2020.

**Stevenage:** The **Broken Seal** in Basils Road, owned by BOG brewery opened in September.

**Titmore Green:** The **Hermit of Redcoats** closed for a short period in 2019 then reopened in the hands of the previous management couple from the Chequers, Stevenage Old Town. The freehold has been put on sale by Greene King.

**Tring:** The **Craft Yard** no real ale.

**Welham Green:** The **Hope & Anchor** closed in November 2018 and reopened on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019. To keep up to date on pub changes, see CAMRA's Pub database site – [www.whatpub.com](http://www.whatpub.com)

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## Fast & loose Golden Bear

Re the last Pints of View 297 it has been pointed out to me (and has probably been mentioned by other Hitchhiker fans), the article on p6 of the last edition re the Golden Bear future beer has the name wrong - Slatibarst should be Slartibartfast.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that Beerblefish had already been down that route with beers such as Pan Galactic Pale and Infinite Improbability...

*Bill Austin*

**Ed says:** I am no expert on foreign beer styles, preferring good British cask conditioned beer myself and can do no more than accept Bill's superior knowledge.

## Vertical drinking from another angle

I was interested to read Steve Bury's article on Vertical Drinking in no.297 but I'm happy to say that, during my years of visiting pubs, standing at the bar had little to do with speedy replenishment or restricted hours or - horror of horror- drinking from the bottle! And I agree with Steve that binge drinking is quite another matter.

One of the main reasons for standing (or sitting) at the bar is to be in contact with the person behind the bar - usually the licensee. During most of the twentieth century the licensee was something of a pillar of society and most regular customers liked to feel a rapport and be on first name terms with the Governor. To many he was something of a confidant frequently asked for advice, sometimes of a very personal nature. Regulars expected to find him, or his wife, available at the bar when they called and were sometimes quite miffed if he was absent!

I am speaking, of course, of the days of restricted licencing hours. Obviously, during these degenerate drinking days, with pubs open all hours, one can hardly expect the governor to be on duty for twenty-four hours a day! However, if he hopes to create a regular trade he does need to be seen behind the bar during the main sessions.

When friends meet at a pub they usually gather at the bar because, apart from contact with the licensee, this is the hub of activity in the establishment. "The cellar may be the engine-room but the bar is the bridge." It is interesting to note the different drinking habits between the Army and the R.A.F. In an Army officers' mess one is usually expected to sit at a table and wait for service from the steward. R.A.F. Officers find this very frustrating because in their own mess they are served at the bar which is certainly speedier and more convivial.

*Sam Hall*

**Ed Says:** Always good to hear from Sam and I have

spent many a happy hour or so drinking at the bar and sharing pleasantries with the licensee between other customers being served. Bar flies are an unfortunate scourge of some pubs and can make one's visit quite uncomfortable. There has to be a bit of consideration shown and mine host can help.

Any comments, articles or letters for publication are welcome. Please send to: **Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.** Or send an Email to us at: [pintsofview@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pintsofview@hotmail.co.uk)

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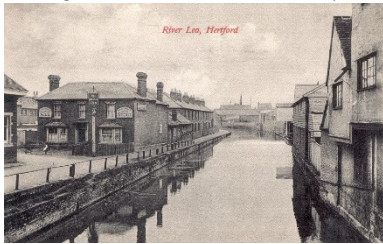
## A Pint at the Local – A Regular Pints of View Series

## No.18 The Old Barge, Hertford

By Les Middlewood

There's something quintessentially English about a canalside pub. Watching the boats drifting by, the ducks and the geese. A pint, a snack, summer sunshine. The Old Barge, in the centre of Hertford, fits this bill but when it opened around 1837 the local picture was much different. Folly Island, on which the pub sits, was a site of wharves and small industry as well as gardens and orchards, utilising the benefits of the River Lea, bustling with activity with river barges heading to and from London carrying malt, timber, vegetables and flour. The pub was therefore a retreat which offered locally-brewed beer - taking advantage of the Beer Act of 1830 in opening to serve the local workforce.

Change began in the 1860s as industry on the river declined now being quickly replaced by rail – and it was then that the first houses were built on the island. This rapidly continued - mostly two-up-two-down terraced houses built for working people, not only fronting the river but also four new streets created along the routes of old field boundaries. Within 40 years most of the houses had been built and the Old Barge took on a different mantle as a two-bar pub serving the new local community.



By 1846 the pub, up until then called the Jolly Bargeman was

tenanted by John Hughes,

owner of a clay pipe factory to the rear and Hughes together with his sons survived the sale that year to the Hawkes brewery of Bishop's Stortford. Hughes' son (also called John) became a prominent Hertfordshire cricketer. Around 1880 John Isaac became licensee, going on to complete a lengthy stint at the pub. In 1898 the pub was sold to Benskin's of Watford and largely rebuilt – much of the riverside frontage to the east built on the former clay pipe factory site.

Prior to WWI, Harry Garner took the lease, overseeing the pub for 20 years. Harry was a famous speed-walker in his younger days, holding all manner of national records from 1 – 30 miles. In 1891, in New York, he established a world record of 1 minute 23 seconds for the ¼ mile. During his tenure the pub displayed his many awards.

Benskin's were taken over by Ind Coope in 1957 who were then subsumed into Allied Breweries in 1961. Real ale, which had been discontinued at the pub in the 1960's, reappeared with the arrival of a handpump for Ind Coope Burton Ale in 1977. Ind Coope Bitter soon followed. In 1980 Benskin's Bitter re-emerged though now brewed by Allied at Romford. In 1982 landlords Don and Carol Blackett oversaw the transformation of the pub into roughly its current layout – the two bars at the front connected by arches and the riverside frontage and room to the rear brought into bar and restaurant use. Overnight the pub became a roaring success. In 1996 the pub survived a major fire, closing for many weeks and in 2009 it was surprisingly put up for sale by Punch Taverns who had inherited the pub from Allied. It was acquired as a Free House by existing leaseholder David Gay with Sally and Simon Davis (who had arrived at the pub as managers in 2006) at the helm – as they still are today. In 2017 an extension was added to the restaurant area.

For over 10 years the Old Barge has been an ever-present in the **Good Beer Guide** and now offers four



real ales (with Marston's 61 Deep as its staple beer) and four real ciders or perries. There is an interesting menu of modern, freshly cooked and classic English pub favourites, a huge open fire and a large drinking area at the rear – the pub attracting people from across Hertford and further afield. The pub hosts a charity music event every May called the Spring Fling (this year on Bank Holiday Monday 25th May) and each year children can "buy" a plastic duck to take part in the annual Duck Race that starts at the nearby Folly Bridge (this year on Bank Holiday Monday, 13th April at 5pm). The Sunday pub quiz is ever-popular and music aficionados can enjoy the music quiz that takes place every last Thursday of the month. Simon says "We are an old school real ale pub, keen to help local brewers, with a busy restaurant using locally-sourced food and a wide range of events during the year that include whisky tastings and drinks/food matchings".

Les Middlewood

## The Rise of the Micro-pub – A Pint-sized Revolution

The micro-pub revolution has now been going for over 10 years, with well over 200 micro-pubs across the country. Martyn Hillier opened

the first micro-pub in Britain - **The Butchers Arms** in Herne, Kent (right) in November 2005 - the day after bringing in the 2003 Licensing Act.



This legislation finally made it no longer essential to prove the need for a licence to sell alcohol and thus avoided the battle with the pub companies in court when trying to gain a licence. Kent became the focus for many micro-pubs before the concept spread throughout the country. So, what is a micro-pub? They are small free houses which listen to their customers, promote conversation, serve real ale and shun all forms of electronic entertainment. Micro-pubs encourage conversation and talking to strangers is the norm, with no barrier between the landlord and the customer. Most micro-pubs have only one room, which is personal and inviting, with simple home-style furniture. Most focus on cask ale, although some have cider, wine, spirits and keg craft beers. No meals are served, but small bar snacks and pub games may be available. Often there is seating around the room, to promote conversation, rather than separate inward-facing tables. Some micro-pubs don't have a bar and offer table service with beer served direct from the casks in the cellar area. They are usually one-off, not part of a chain and some only have limited opening hours. They are locally orientated, as a community hub and often put new life into old shops on declining high streets. Many of the premises have modest rent and minimal overheads and offer well-priced beers, including vegan and unfiltered beers. However, some micro-pubs serve as much keg lager as cask ale and others may be owned by a single brewery; others may have evolved from bottle shops or brewery taps. Some only offer keg craft beer, so do not fit our description since they don't serve any real cask ale. So, the essential hallmarks of a good micro-pub are: conversation – you are joining a welcoming community with whom you share an interest in beer; they serve real cask ale, excellently kept; and there are no distractions! Micro-pubs have gained the

reputation of being well-run, civilised establishments, good neighbours and hubs for the community. They take you back to the days of the old alehouses, when beer was served from a firkin in someone's front room. They have a landlord who enjoys his work, loves cask ale and is grateful to have found an independent living; he makes it his business to create a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. And the small size of the premises means customers mix with others and make friends and conversations.

This new wave of micro-pubs has certainly increased the options available to real ale drinkers and has helped to offset the losses of traditional pubs plus helping the growth of local micro-breweries. Cheers to the micro-pub – small, but perfectly formed!

*Steve James - first published in Ale Sabrina the Bridgnorth CAMRA magazine.*

**Ed says:** As Steve points out in his article, there is a proliferation of micro pubs in Kent and Hertfordshire is fortunate to have a few as well. The problem is when does a micro-pub become large enough to be classed as a pub? In the county we have over the last eighteen months seen both Farr, Mad Squirrel set up Tap Rooms, some of which are quite sizable so taking into account that size matters (they are micro-pubs after all) the list is:-

Hemel Hempstead's **Monks Inn**, Hitchin **Beer Shop**, Letchworth Garden City **Crafty's** and the **Arena Tavern**, Hertford's **Crafty Duck**, Markyate **The Local**, St Albans the **Beer Shop** and **Bishops Cave**, Wheathampstead the **Reading Rooms**. I ask you to excuse me in advance for any establishments that are overlooked (I am sure that readers will write in!).

## Reverse Guinness - what next?

Brewers are always trying something new to catch the interest of a small niche market.

Team Toxic are one of these and run a single batch micro-brewery in Birkenhead, Merseyside

One of their recent brews has been Sinistral, a 'back-to-front' Guinness, which has a white body with a black head and looks like a glass of milk topped with bubbling tar.





Gazza Prescott and Sue Hayward's joint brewers in the team toxic venture say 'reverse stout' tastes delicious, and they have been inundated with orders. Hayward said "People see Sinistral being poured and think 'what the hell is that?', and they're usually so intrigued that they have to try it. It's rich, cakey and chocolatey – but the most important thing is it tastes unmistakably like beer, which is what we set out to do".

Sinistral – which means left-handed – came about from Hayward's discontentment with the world's white stouts. They are usually brewed by leaving out the dark, heavily roasted grains that lend beers like Guinness their appearance – however, they're often more golden or pale amber in colour. We wanted to brew a white stout that's actually white, a reverse Guinness if you like, only 1,200 litres were produced and don't expect to find out how they did it – their recipe is a closely-guarded secret. Another closely guarded secret is whether it is real ale or not.

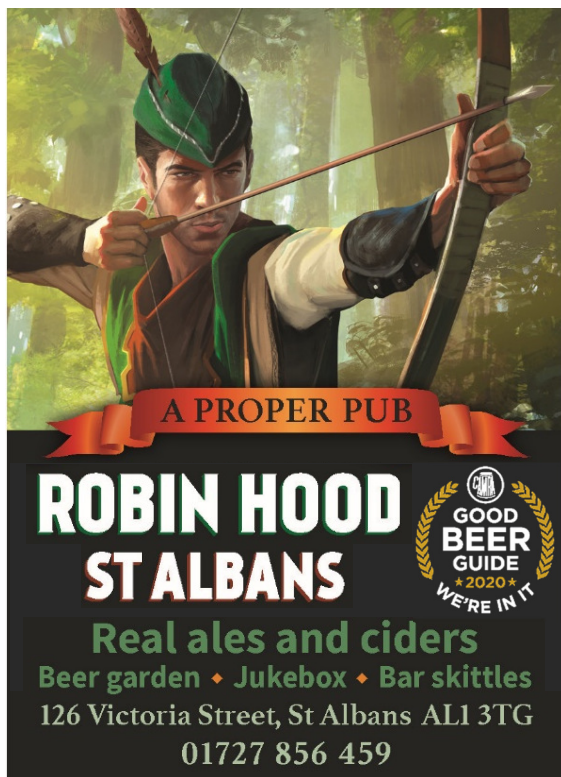
## Booking hangover days - what next?

Well, we've just been through that time of year when overdoing it is a bit too easy, especially when someone else is paying. Rather than see employees struggling into work the owners of Audit Lab, a digital marketing agency in Bolton, has been allowing them to book hangover absences. Like a growing number of employers, the Audit Lab offers flexible working arrangements, including flexible hours and unlimited holiday. It also lets employees take "hangover days" which are part of a perks package that is key to attracting talent out of Manchester.

The company says they would rather employees were honest than claiming fake sickness. So far it is going well, and as far as Audit Lab is concerned the perk is not being abused. The team are expected to book a hangover day in advance, if they know they are going out. So, it's a work from home day sexed up a bit for the young generation.

## The Works Christmas party

A publican I knew well told me the one thing he didn't like was works Christmas parties. I could not understand why, as it must be a good source of income and would normally be fully or partially paid for by the company, and encourage people to imbibe slightly more than usual. His point was; he welcomed the Golf Club, the Classic Car Enthusiasts, Ramblers, Cycle Clubs etc because they



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all wanted to be part of the organisation and take part in the events. Works parties he said were an entirely different matter; most were there under sufferance and would argue about the bill, the food and with each other when they had had a drink. There were also indiscrete liaisons, which again could lead to problems.

About 84% of official workplace social events involve alcohol, according to research carried out for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

During the festive season 40% of businesses say that alcohol was freely available and paid for by the company, while 39% say alcohol will be available to buy with no limit.

The impact can be positive and negative, with Four out of ten HR managers surveyed saying that alcohol can cause problems at work. But almost 50% of the managers said having some drinks at social events had a positive effect on morale and team bonding.

*Steve Bury*

## New Picture Library Free to View

**H**ertford Museum has launched a new on-line picture library – an initial upload of 10,000 photographs with another 10,000 as time proceeds – all available free-to-view. The pictures straddle the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries and are taken from the Museum's glass images, negatives and slides plus prints and postcards. Not surprisingly



the collection majors on Hertford and its environs but it also extends way beyond this to all corners of

Hertfordshire. Pints of View readers interested in pubs can go straight to a wealth of pictures of pubs from Long Marston and Rickmansworth in the west to Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and

Ware in the east, Royston and Hitchin in the north then Cheshunt, Potters Bar and Watford in the south – and many of the villages in between. Also captured are pictures of some of Hertfordshire's former breweries.

Go to: [www.hertfordmuseumimages.org](http://www.hertfordmuseumimages.org)  
Our selection shows (top to bottom):



of a door bolt being released to signify opening time – at the **Boot**, Sarratt (below).

It is possible to purchase these images either as prints for private use (from as little as £5) or digital images (from £10) and commercial prices are also available.

And if you are wondering what to do with pictures you may have taken over the years and which maybe are of wider interest, why not contact your local town or



The **White Hart**, Hertford (top); the **Plough**, Flamstead End (above); the **Coopers Arms** (left), Hitchin and, bottom, thirsty gents patiently waiting for the age-old sound



village museum – they will probably be very pleased to receive them. Hertford Museum covers the towns and villages of Buckland, Buntingford, Puckeridge, Standon, The Pelhams, Watton-at-Stone, Dane End, Brickendon, Hertingfordbury, Little Berkhamsted and all places in between.

*Les Middlewood*

## CAMRA North Hertfordshire Branch Annual General Meeting Notice

**T**he branch will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at The **Orange Tree**, Norton Road, Baldock, SG7 5AW from 8.00pm. The pub is only a few minutes' walk from Baldock railway station (see [www.theorangetreebaldock.com/index.htm](http://www.theorangetreebaldock.com/index.htm) for directions).

At this meeting the committee will present the Branch audited financial accounts and ask for the members approval. The committee will also report on the events over the last year. There will be an opportunity to question the committee on the branch events. Also, at the meeting the Branch Committee for the next year will be elected in accordance with the Branch constitution (copies of which are available from the Branch Secretary [secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk)). Please note only CAMRA members can attend the branch AGM and that only North Herts Branch members can vote at the election of the committee.

Attending the AGM is a good way to see what the branch does, and we welcome branch members to get more involved in the activities of the branch. If you wish to stand for a position on the committee, nominations for membership of the branch committee shall be by email to the branch secretary ([secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk)).

Each nomination must be signed by a proposer and seconder, where the nominee, proposer and seconder must be members of the Branch and be accompanied by evidence of the willingness of the nominee to stand. We will accept nominations at the AGM, but ideally, we would prefer nominations to be sent in advance.

*Jeremy Kitson, Branch Secretary, CAMRA North Herts*

The North Herts CAMRA website has been revamped and is now regularly updated. Take a look you may be pleasantly surprised. Website address: [www.camranorthherts.org.uk](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk)

Members can determine the mailings and information they want to receive from CAMRA. See the GDPR article page 3.

*This section contains information from a large number of sources and occasionally errors may occur. News items are supplied to meet newsletter deadlines, and which in some cases may unfortunately be out of date upon publication.*

*Comments or additional information should be sent to our contact details on page 17.*

**Amwell:** The lease of the **Elephant & Castle** is To Let.  
**Bushey:** The **Horse & Chains** has been reopened under the same management team as the **Royal Oak** in Watford Heath. There are planning applications in place to carry out some minor work to the outdoor smoking area and refurbish the interior. Should those applications be approved the pub will most probably close for a short time early in the year for the work to be completed. The most recent application to convert the **Royal Oak** on Sparrows Herne to flats was refused. A group of residents has nominated it as an Asset of Community Value. However, the pub was closed abruptly on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

**Epping Green:** The **Beehive** closed in January for a refurbishment and is due to reopen "in the Spring".

**Hatfield:** Farr brewery have made another acquisition, the **Eight Bells** in Old Hatfield which they took over on 29<sup>th</sup> November. It is pleasing to see this historic pub in safe hands after a lot of speculation about its future.

**Newgate Street:** The **Crown** following being reopened with a temporary landlord, closed again in January for a refurbishment.

**Rickmansworth:** The **Pennsylvanian** is still open as a Wetherspoon pub. The company had put the pub up for sale, but customers of the pub submitted a petition with 300 signatures and the decision was reversed.

**St Albans:** Rumours are circulating that the **Verulam Arms** has been acquired by the owners of the cocktail bars **Sucker Punch** (George Street) & **Naughts & Crosses** (ex Harrow / Mokoko). It is also rumoured that the owner of the **Great Northern** wishes to build over the garden/patio area, and in a surprise move it is reported that St Albans District Council have put an ACV on the pub. The **Victoria** has been refurbished. One of the things that is missing in the photo display are handpumps. This must surely be an oversight by Star Taverns the owners. Confirmation of beers on offer needed. Congratulations to Steve McConnell of the **White Hart Tap** see article page 13.

**Watford:** 3 Brewers launched a bottled filtered beer brewed exclusively for The **Grove Hotel**, using hops grown in the hotel's walled garden.

**Watton at Stone:** The **Green Dragon** is To Let.



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**Welham Green:** The **Hope & Anchor** which re-opened 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 has no real ale at present, but still intend to serve Adnams *Broadside*.

### ALL HERTFORDSHIRE CAMRA BRANCHES

**Thu 13 Feb:** Herts Liaison Meeting – **Royal Oak**, Southwark. 7pm

**Sat 7 Mar:** East Anglian Regional Meeting – **Wibblers Brewery**, Southminster, Essex, CM0 7JW. Starts at noon

### HERTS & ESSEX BORDERS CAMRA

**Mon 9 Feb:** Branch AGM & Good Beer Guide Selection – **Hoops Inn**, Perry Green, Much Hadham. The Branch Pub of the Year, Branch Cider Pub of the Year, and Branch Club of the Year will also be decided. Starts at 8.30pm.

**Sat 15 – Sun 16 Feb:** Weekend away to Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate. Visit to the corner of Kent where there is a huge number of Micro Pubs, and breweries – plenty to choose from.

Accommodation at Travelodge Margate Westwood, Westwood Cross Retail Park, Unit 53, Margate Rd, Ramsgate, CT12 5GR.

**Mon 9 Mar:** Branch meeting – **Black Lion**, High Roding, Dunmow. 8.30pm

### NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE CAMRA

**Wed 5 Feb:** Royston Social – **Jollie Posty, Old Bull, Chequers, Banyers & Manor House**. Starts 8pm

**Sat 15 Feb:** Mini Bus Trip – **Plough**, Ley Green; **Lilley Arms**, Lilley; **Green Man & Red Lion**, Great Offley; and **Strathmore Arms**, St. Pauls Walden. Pick-ups from 6pm Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth & Baldock £5 Members, £8 non-Members, (book by 12 Feb),

**Thu 20 – Sat 22 Feb:** **Stevenage Beer Festival**, Leisure Centre Stevenage. See our web site for details.

**Wed Mar 11:** Hitchin Social – **Anchor**, Mill Stream, Molly Malones, Albert, and Radcliffe. Starts 8pm.

**Sat Mar 14:** Mini Bus Trip – **Rusty Gun**, Chapelfoot; **Bell**, Globe, Codicote; and **Robin Hood and Little John**, Rabley Heath. Pick-ups from 6pm Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth & Baldock £5 Members, £8 non-Members, (book by 11 Mar).

**Fri Mar 20:** North Herts Branch AGM – **Orange Tree**, Baldock. 8PM

For further information, see page 22, our web site, (now well up-to-date), or email:

[socialsecretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:socialsecretary@camranorthherts.org.uk) for details and any last-minute changes to all the above.

### SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE CAMRA

**Tue 18 Feb:** Committee Meeting – **White Hart Tap**, St Albans – 7.45pm

**Tue 17 Mar:** Branch Meeting – **North Mymms Club**, Welham Green (tbc) – 8pm. Speaker tbc.

### WATFORD & DISTRICT CAMRA

**Thur 6 Feb:** Abbots Langley social – **Royal Oak**, Kitters Green, Abbots Langley, WD5 0ET, 8.30pm; **Abbots Langley & District Mens' Club**, 21 Trowley Rise, WD5 0LN, 9.15pm; **Compasses**, 95 Tibbs Hill Road, WD5 0LJ, 10pm

**Thur 20 Feb:** Rickmansworth social – **Western**, 205 High Street, Rickmansworth, WD3 1BB, 8.30pm; **Wishful Drinking**, 124 High Street, WD3 1AB, 9.15pm; **Fox & Hounds**, 183 High Street, WD3 1AY, 10pm

**Mon 24 Feb:** Branch meeting – **Wellington Arms**, 2 Woodford Road, Watford, WD17 1PA, 8pm

**Tue 3 Mar:** Bushey social – **Bushey Conservative Club**, 7 High Street, Bushey, WD23 1BD, 8.30pm; **Red Lion**, 50 High Street, WD23 3HN, 9.15pm; **Swan**, 25 Park Road, WD23 3EE, 10pm

**Thu 19 Mar:** Annual Breweriana Auction – **West Herts Sports Club**, 8 Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP. Viewing from 7pm for an 8pm start. **See advert opposite.**

**Mon 30 Mar:** Branch AGM – **Wellington Arms**, 2 Woodford Road, Watford, WD17 1PA, 8pm

## CAMRA BRANCH CONTACTS

### Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA

**Chairman** – Brendan Sothcott, Tel: 01279 507493

**Minibus Bookings** – Call Graham on: 07753266983, Email: [mini-bus@heb-camra.org.uk](mailto:mini-bus@heb-camra.org.uk)

**Pubs Officer** – Vacant, any urgent enquiries to Chairman Brendan Sothcott.

**Socials Contact Email:** [social@heb-camra.org.uk](mailto:social@heb-camra.org.uk)

**Email:** [Secretary@heb-camra.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@heb-camra.org.uk)

**Internet:** [www.heb-camra.org.uk](http://www.heb-camra.org.uk)

### North Hertfordshire CAMRA

**Chairman** – Paul Coard

**Email:** [chairman@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:chairman@camranorthherts.org.uk)

**Branch Contact** – Jeremy Kitson

**Email:** [secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:secretary@camranorthherts.org.uk)

**Socials Secretary** – Brian Mason

**Email:** [socialsecretary@camranorthherts.org.uk](mailto:socialsecretary@camranorthherts.org.uk),

**Internet:** [www.camranorthherts.org.uk](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk)

### South Hertfordshire CAMRA

**Branch Contact:** John Bishop, Tel: 07720 295419,

**Email:** [realales@yahoo.com](mailto:realales@yahoo.com)

**Socials Secretary:** Ian Boyd, Tel: 07402 323525

**Email:** [ian.boyd@me.com](mailto:ian.boyd@me.com)

**Internet:** [www.hertsale.org.uk](http://www.hertsale.org.uk)

### Watford & District CAMRA

**Branch Contact:** Andrew Vaughan.

**Email:** [branch@watford.camra.org.uk](mailto:branch@watford.camra.org.uk)

**Phone:** 01923 230104. **Mobile:** 07854 988152.

**Internet:** [www.watford.camra.org.uk](http://www.watford.camra.org.uk)





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# Attention ALL CAMRA members!

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