This is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth branch of CAMRA.

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LAST Orders

No 114 Dec/Jan 2026

CAMRA membership in November: 143,232

Inside:

The free bi-monthly CAMRA newsletter for Lichfield, Atherstone, Sutton Coldfield & Tamworth

now also serving the Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA region

LAST Orders

The magazine of the Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth branch of CAMRA, also serving Nuneaton & Bedworth branch.

6 issues per year, issued at the beginning of the months of Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec. The magazine is free and circulated widely through the branch areas and beyond.

Contributions are welcomed, pub news particularly. Contact the editor.

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The opinions expressed in Last Orders are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches

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Front Cover

The front cover features the heritage bus used for our Tamworth Beer Festival thank-you trip. It's a Leyland Leopard from 1979, owned and driven by Cameron (left of picture). Pictured to the right is Dean of Statfold Country Park, owner of the heritage double decker we've used before!

Thanks to both Cameron and Dean for the trip.

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Chair Chat

Cheers locals and visitors to the LST branch area. I'm penning this whilst savouring a delicious dark mild in front of a roaring fire, looking out at a frosty landscape. The cold snap has been a real shock to the system, but a great opportunity to try some great winter warmers around the branch. It is of course, that time of year when our branch volunteers step up to survey local pubs for inclusion in next year's *Good Beer Guide*. LST have a great team of surveyors working through the beer scores and criteria. It's a tough job but somebody has to do it!

I had the pleasure of accompanying fellow branch members to Crich Brewery Tap in Belper (see page 8), to attend the presentation for Tamworth's Beer of the Festival. We had a great time at the Tap House and the subsequent wander around Belper. There will be another opportunity for a get-together with fellow members on our annual Christmas Crawl around Lichfield on December 13th (see page 24 for the itinerary). Why not come along and join us? It's one of the highlights of our busy social calendar.

We'll know the outcome of the forthcoming budget by the time this magazine is with you; here's hoping pubs will still be able to afford to put the fire on come December. Please keep supporting your local, and pubs generally.

George Greenaway, LST Chairman

Coming Up On Fifty

It's hardly news that Sheffield is a great city for beer, with pubs aplenty in both the centre and further afield. But despite it now being in its 49th year, it's to my eternal shame that I'd never been to the Sheffield CAMRA beer festival – a situation I rectified this year. And what a relevation it was!

Held in the Kelham Island Museum, a venue it has used for around a decade, it features 200+ ales split between a marquee and a large internal hall. Around a quarter of the beers are on handpump, with long arrays of pumps (right) on each bar. There was an excellent range of styles and strengths, with around a quarter of the ales dark or black. A good range of ciders are served, and there's also a separate KeyKeg bar.

Star of the fest though is the museum's River Don steam engine (left), which was fired up a number of times for the festival attendees. This 12,000 horsepower monster was retired from active service in a steel rolling mill in the 1970s. To see this steamy, rumbling giant running at full speed brings a tingle to the spine.

The festival turns 50 next year – look out for it!

Adam Randall

Find Your Tribe

Extremely pale in colour, clean and crisp, mineral notes, a good level of carbonation, and the distinctive tang of Citra hops. It's so light and refreshing, it could almost be water …

Welcome to **Tipsy Tribe Brewery & Distillery**'s most unlikely product – *Hop Water*, dry-hopped sparkling water. But rest assured, this splendid little outfit, on the outskirts of Brussels city centre, produces some outstanding beers and spirits. There are typically four beers on tap at the on-site bar, plus a range of bottles. A recent visit saw draught offerings of *Kicho*, a Japanese IPA including rice in the grain mix; *Horangi*, a pale lager brewed for a Korean street food chain based in Belgium; *Desita*, a German helles-style with South African hops; and *Swim To The Moon*, a classic hazy NEIPA. For a small and relatively new brewery, the beers are all highly proficient: sharp, crisp and clean, but at the same time full of flavour, a somewhat unusual combination. If you're more into malty, grainy, caramelly beers then this may not be the place for you.

The outfit is the creation of Dan and Aylin Fastenau, who took over the rather run-down building in 2021, produced the first commercial beers in 2022, and opened it up to the public a couple of years ago. They're an engaging couple – he hailing from the US, she from Turkey – who give the place a welcoming air. As the place, left, is essentially a working brewery and distillery with the bar in the midst of grain sacks and bottle boxes, the personal touch turns it into somewhere more intimate.

The brewhouse is impressive enough in it's own right, but as well as beer – and if four on draught is not enough, you should also explore the bottled range – there is a range of fancy spirits on offer, all made using the large still at the rear of the brewery. There is also the tantalising prospect of the first-ever whisky to be made in Brussels, quietly maturing in its wooden cask and expected to be approved for release next year. Or if full-strength spirits are a step too far, then the *Xoco* is well worth a shot, a chocolate liqueur which is so gorgeously rich that it's best reserved for the last drink – or two.

A short walk from the Elisabeth metro stop, Tipsy Tribe is easily accessible and should be high on the list for a visit. And if further motivation is required, there are also two splendid brewery-cum-taps within reasonable walking distance close by – **La Source Beer Co** and **Brasserie de la Senne**. As ever, check opening times before setting out, but before that, time to start looking at Eurostar tickets?

TIPSY TRIBE
Brewery & Distillery

Next LST Branch Meetings

Tue 2nd Dec, 7.30pm, Royal Oak, Stonnall
Mon 5th Jan, 7.30pm, Old Bank House, Tamworth
Mon 2nd Feb, 7.30pm, Whippet Inn, Lichfield

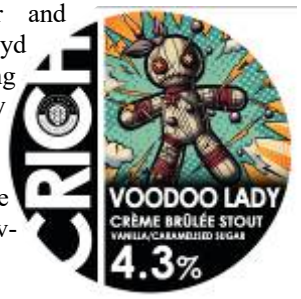
Beers Of The Fest

Once Tamworth Beer Festival – a mixture of both graft and enjoyment! – is over, our next pleasant duty is to present the awards for beers of the festival. So off we go!

Speciality beer of the fest went to Matt Woodroffe of Zero Six brewery of Lutterworth. Matt provided us with a couple of beers for the festival, one of which was *Flamango*, this going on to take the speciality award – quite an achievement given that Tamworth festival is well known for its speciality (aka "weird and wonderful") beers! *Flamango* is a mango and hibiscus beer which is well worth looking out for. Pubs officer John Rowling presented the award to Matt (right of picture) at the **Cork & Hop** bottle shop in Lutterworth; Matt is often behind the counter in the shop, where you can also drink the range of cans and bottles on the premises. Matt kindly gave us a tasting of some of his key beers, including the *Matoaka 82* IPA (his first-ever commercial brew) and *Unfair Dismissal* pale ale (ask about the story behind the name should you drink one in the shop!)

Matt was a keen home brewer before going commercial in 2021, with his friend and business partner Spike. With 200-litre or 500-litre brew lengths on his own kit, and the option of cuckoo brewing in a larger brewery, Matt can be quite flexible regarding the styles of beers produced – experimental one-off or known crowd pleaser? So expect to see plenty more of Zero Six beers, though maybe under a slightly different name. The name – derived from the shared 2006 birth year of daughters of Matt and Spike – apparently causes a number of potential customers to assume that the brewery is a no/low alcohol brewery! While low ABV beers are not off the agenda, it does mean that the brewery name could benefit from a tweak, maybe to something like Zed Six. We may well have some of the beers at Tamworth beer festival next year, so find out there!

As a full third of the festival beers are black or dark, we'd normally have a dark beer award. But as the overall beer of the festival this year was black, we saved ourselves a job! The supreme winner was *Voodoo Lady*, a crème brûlée stout from Crich Brew Co of Belper. Which was doubly fortunate, as Belper is a splendid place for a day out in its many excellent real ale pubs! We started naturally enough at **Crich Brew Co Tap Room**, hosted by owner and brewer Lloyd Stringer. Lloyd is pictured (right of pic) being presented with the award by mag editor Adam Randall.



The tap is an excellent place to visit, with the seating right next to the brewing kit. There is also an original cobbled floor, though the uneven surface does mean that some caution is required when moving around after a few beers …

Beers Of The Fest cont.

Lloyd's brewery business has grown remarkably quickly, but he got into it almost by accident. A keen homebrewer for many years, he was asked by friends to produce a bespoke beer for their wedding. Having looked into the licensing issues, he decided it would simplest to set up as a formal brewery, which he did in at outbuilding at his home in Crich – hence the name. He started out with a 200-litre brewkit, but then quickly went to 500-litre, which really didn't fit easily into the available space – hence the move to Belper!

He acquired the current building in July 2024, doubling the kit again to 1000 litres, and producing his first commercial brew there in September 2024. So he's come a long way in just over a year. The tap opens from Friday to Sunday, only to 6pm at present, but with an application in place to extend opening until 8pm. Well worth a visit.

Meanwhile, Charity beer of the festival was presented, appropriately enough, on the beer festival thank-you trip! This year this was awarded to David Jackson for his splendid *Basil's Breakfast Blunder*, brewed under the Dexter badge. David (right of picture) was presented with the award by festival organiser Ian Eason. This took place in Nuneaton's **Lord Hop** micropub, the first stop of an enjoyable trip, with transport provided by Dean and Cameron, in Cameron's vintage bus, as pictured on the front cover.

If you've ever said that "this beer tastes like piss", then here's the stuff for you. Borinage brewery of Belgium produces *Urine*, a 7% double IPA of a suitable colour. The brewers say "It's a double IPA like you've never drunk" and also exhort you to "Taste our Urine". If nothing else, it'll sell to gullible mugs, just for the name. It worked on me after all …

The Crown Inn

The Crown Inn, Nuneaton, a great pub we've sadly lost. The present-day building is pictured right. The building dates from 1905, though this was a rebuild of an earlier Crown on the same site.

My history with the Crown started in 2003, when I really got the taste for real ale. At that time the pub was known as Lloyds but has carried many former names. I started going in on a Friday and Saturday evening checking out the different ales on the bar and soon enough I started ticking the beers. Five ales were generally on regularly, but soon this extended to 10 at weekends and then 14!

It became a well-known tickers' pub on the Leicester and Birmingham circuit, with the convenient location near the station allowing tickers to stop off to check out the line up of beers on the way home. The pub also became the home of Fantasy Brewery for a spell, using the brewing kit from the Rat & Ratchet Brewery, and producing 85 beers over its lifetime.

The pub at the time was operated by Bob and Pam, a great couple. The lease was sold on in 2006 to Julian Harkins from the Nags Head (now also long gone) and the pub reverted to the original name of the Crown Inn. It became a home of live music at weekends, regular beer festivals were held over the years, and many local groups found a home here using the function room upstairs.

Unfortunately in February 2018 the pub suddenly closed due to financial difficulties. It remained closed and was eventually purchased by Rent-A-Room, with planning permission granted to turn it into accommodation. Russ Dyble of Rent-A-Room held an official opening of the building, now known as Crown House, entrance pictured left, on Saturday 8th November 2025, with many visiting to see and reminisce the old times of drinking quality ales here.

The whole building was in a bad state after plenty of vandalism, and also had many structural problems. These issues have been addressed following a three-and-a-half year refurbishment, using local businesses and contractors. There is high quality living and communal areas, with pictures, signs and ornaments on display that link the building to its past. For some reason, the old cask lifter – pictured right – is still in the cellar!

On the exterior, the large Crown Hotel moulding high on the gable – which was pulling the gable down – has been replaced with a Crown House equivalent. This old moulding now resides in the rear garden, left.

Myself and many other members who visited thank Russ and the team for the opportunity to visit what was once a fantastic pub in Nuneaton.

Charlotte Richards

Beer Snippets

In an interesting piece of research – or marketing? – Kingfisher Drinks produced their 2025 'Boring Beers Index', highlighting the top ten lager brands that drinkers are most bored of seeing. There was also a similar top ten for ale and stout. There are few surprises in the league of boring lager, with *Carling* and *Fosters* topping the table of tedium. Maybe no surprises either in the ale and stout table, with Greene King *IPA* and *Abbot*, *Doom Bore*, *London Pride* and *Landlord* in no danger of relegation.

Kingfisher – maker of brewed-in-Kent 'Indian' lager *Kingfisher* – publishes the index annually, and what a surprise, *Kingfisher* does not feature in the list. The company states that the report offers publicans "some good insight and advice to get more creative with their beer ranges." Which it might do if the rankings were actually of the most interesting beers! So maybe, just maybe – we're going out on a limb here – in reality it's just an attempt to get *Kingfisher* on the bar?

With the Government considering the introduction of a lower drink-drive limit (from 80 to 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood) to align with Scotland, Christopher Snowden of the Institute of Economic Affairs published an excellent opinion piece in the *Morning Advertiser*. Among many other interesting points, he cited two peer-reviewed studies demonstrating that reducing the limit in Scotland has had no effect on either the number of road accidents or the number of road fatalities. In response to the reports, one of the companies lobbying for a reduction – whose vested interest is that they make breathalysers! – said in a press release "Opponents often point to Scotland, claiming that its 2014 change had no measurable impact on casualties. But a 2024 survey [by this breathalyser company], marking the tenth anniversary of the law, found that 79% of Scots believed it has made roads safer."

So in this alternative-truth scenario, it doesn't matter if a policy failed as long as people believe that it worked!

We all know that January can be a tough time for pubs. Not only are many wallets slim after the splurges of Christmas, but bright sparks in the anti-alcohol industry have delivered an extra kick in the knackers with the concept of Dry January, a pub-killer campaign which has been running for over 10 years now.

Castle Rock's pushback contribution this year is a #31PubsInJanuary campaign. Rather dramatically badged as a "month-long pub crawl", it urges participants to visit 31 pubs in 31 days, "keep the taps flowing and the landlords smiling" – which sounds a bit much even to us! But they further explain that you don't need to be on the pop every single day of the month, just visit 31 pubs over the month, and that non-alcoholic drinks still count. We can certainly agree with their basic point: it's a celebration of the places that make Britain brilliant, and that pubs are a shining light in our communities.

Up for the challenge? It's about any pub, not just Castle Rock pubs, and if you share your journey online with #31PubsInJanuary, then Castle Rock will reward you. Though only with a downloadable certificate, not a pint or a bit of merch – which somewhat takes the shine off!

Joking aside, it does matter – please don't abandon pubs in January, even if it involves non-alcoholic drinks. As Hilaire Belloc said (not someone we frequently quote in *Last Orders*!): "When you have lost your inns, drown your empty selves, for you will have lost the last of England".

Six Of One, Half A Dozen Of The Other

Read recently, an otherwise excellent novel (John Boyne's *All The Broken Places*) had a surprising lapse in its historical accuracy – or at least, surprising if you are a bit of a beer history nerd. Part of the novel is set in Sydney in 1952, and involves one of the famous pubs in the waterside Rocks area, the **Fortune of War**. The pub, still thriving to the present day, dates from 1824 and claims to be Sydney's oldest. The central character of the book arrives at the Fortune at six in the evening, anticipating "an influx of men who wanted to spend an hour or two after work among friends, drinking beer."

Nah! In reality those after-work grog seekers would have been sadly disappointed if they indeed turned up at six o'clock – for in 1952, the infamous (but seemingly not famous as far as the author is concerned!) "six o'clock swill" was in place in New South Wales, and indeed much of Australia and New Zealand. This antipodean curiosity involved hotels and pubs closing their bars at 6pm sharp, and anyone turning up after six for a glug of the old amber nectar – or indeed booze of any description – was going to be disappointed.

The measure came about during the First World War. Prior to that, closing times had been pretty much in line with the mother country, around 11pm. Six o'clock was proposed in an attempt to prevent public drunkenness and to assist the war effort, with much of the agitation for it coming from temperance activists seizing the opportunity. Workers would supposedly end up with more money in their pockets, and society would become an altogether more genteel place. It was introduced piecemeal across the different states, with New South Wales actually self-imposing it in 1916 as the result of a public referendum.

However, like US prohibition starting in the 1920s, the legislation was to prove chaotic in its effects. With many workers clocking off at 5pm, the measure fuelled an hour-long drinking spree, with an evening's leisurely drinking and chatting transformed into a 60-minute bear pit of jostling and shouting for more. It allegedly became common practice for drinkers to hold on to empty glasses, demanding multiple refills when the dreaded last call came. There are also stories of pubs rigging up hosepipes to deliver the beer, quickly slushing it into glasses across the room. The temperance ambition that men would now get home to their families at a more respectable hour might have been realised, though what state they were in was a very different matter!

Intended only as a war-time measure, 6pm closing was to prove to be a tenacious creature. While Tasmania saw the light and relaxed the law in 1937, the six o'clock swill stayed in place in New South Wales until 1955, with other states and New Zealand delaying until 1966 and 1967. So for some regions, a full 50 years of beer curfew.

With the legislation in place for such long periods, it is credited with driving unwelcome changes in pub layout, visible in some heritage buildings to this day. Smaller rooms, such as snugs and games rooms, were sacrificed to create big, barn-like drinking spaces. Separate serving counters disappeared in the name of efficiency: long bars became the order of the day. More welcome is the tiling evident in many such pubs, though this is thought to have been introduced to allow for easier sluice-the-joint cleaning after the early evening mayhem!

Zoning Out

On a visit to London in October, I purchased an all-zones (1-9) travel card, which covers public transport in all of Greater London, and allows travel into some parts of Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and Surrey.

My first pub of the day was the award-winning **Land Of Liberty, Peace & Plenty** in Heronsgate, Hertfordshire, pictured right. It was a pleasant twenty-five minutes walk from Chorleywood station and what a gem of a pub it is! Formerly owned by Courage, this free house was decorated with mirrors and other artefacts from breweries past and present. There were five real ales available, all from microbreweries, as well as real cider. Downton *Quadhop* and Mighty Oak *Hydra*, both session ales, were sampled and were on top form.

Heading back in to central London, the next stop was the **Star Tavern** in Belgravia. Remarkably this has been in every edition of the *Good Beer Guide*, but this was the first time I had ever visited it! A traditional mews pub, it was quiet during the mid-afternoon which enabled me to sit and admire the unspoilt surroundings. Four real ales were available, and the friendly staff poured me an excellent Dark Star *Green Hopped IPA*, weighing in at 6.5%. Sadly, Dark Star is no longer an independent brewery: the name is owned by Asahi of Japan and the beers are made by Fullers. The pub offers a generous CAMRA discount, and apparently the infamous Lord Lucan used to live nearby, but I didn't see him sitting at the bar on this occasion!

A short walk to Victoria and a train to Swanley in Kent saw me arrive at the **Cotton Mill** micropub, left. Converted from a public toilet (!) and a taxi office, it was doing a busy trade and deservedly so. As well as the single L-shaped room inside, there were plenty of outside seats within a covered decking area. From the range of four cask beers, I chose Old Dairy *Gold Top* which was a very drinkable session ale. Keg beers from independent breweries and mainstream ciders were also available.

The fourth pub of the day was back in the City of London, beneath Cannon Street station. The **Pelt Trader** had just two real ales available, but with many more keg lines. It was not as busy as I was expecting, but there was a relaxed atmosphere. The cask Iron Pier *Mosaic* was served in good condition from a tap on the bar back. As this was a Friday, many of the nearby city workers were probably working from home, or not at all!

It was a short distance to the next pub, the **Edgar Wallace**, right. It was by contrast quite busy with a seemingly regular clientele, and the welcoming landlord found me a free table. For

Zoning Out cont.

anyone interested in beer and brewery history, this pub is a must. The walls and ceiling were covered with beer mats, illuminated old brewery signs (including one for awful keg *Double Diamond* of yesteryear!) and lanterns, and there were lots of beer-related books on the shelves. I opted for a pint of Harvey's *Sussex Best*, a traditional bitter which was on excellent form. Three other real ales from well-known breweries were also available.

I had read in the CAMRA *London Drinker* magazine about a newly opened pub opposite Charing Cross station, so thought it would be worth a try. Part of a large historic building, **Stranded** is operated by the same business that runs the **Euston Tap** and the **Waterloo Tap**. Considering its location, it wasn't very busy, but maybe people just don't know about it yet! All the beers are poured from the back of the long bar, and after walking past a sea of keg taps, the four hand pumps were found. Bristol Beer Factory *Pure Shores* was an acceptable if unspectacular pale ale.

Just before my train home there was time to pop in to the aforementioned Euston Tap at the front of Euston station. It probably needs no introduction to some who are reading this, and although a wide range of keg and cans are available, the cask offer is pretty good too. Iron Pier *Earnest: Joined At The Green Hop* was a superb beer, making use of hops that are only around at this time of the year. A fitting end to a great day of pubs and beer.

Adrian Smith

Final Four!

Mid-October brought some excellent news for LST branch, that the **Tamworth Tap** has progressed to the final-four stage of CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition! Judges whittled the selection down from the orginal 16 as below, to the final four as highlighted in red. It's worth noting that one of four, the **Blackfriars Tavern**, has already won the National Cider Pub of the Year for 2025 (the cider competition is a shorter timescale); will it go on to take a historic double? Will the Tap win National for a historic third time? Or will one of the other two pubs rise to the top spot? We will have to wait until January next year to find out …

Regional winners 2025 . . . and the final four!

East Anglia **Blackfriars Tavern, Great Yarmouth**	East Central Orange Tree, Baldock
East Midlands Burnt Pig, Ilkeston	Greater London Hope, Carshalton
Merseyside and Cheshire Cricketers Arms, St Helen	North East Station House, Durham
North West Cumberland Inn, Alston	Northern Ireland Dog & Duck Inn, Lisbellaw
Scotland **Volunteer Arms, Musselburgh**	South Central Bell Inn, Aldworth
South East Royston, Broadstairs	South West Hole in the Wall, Bodmin
Wales Rhos yr Hafod Inn, Cross Inn	West Central **Pelican Inn, Gloucester**
West Midlands **TAMWORTH TAP, TAMWORTH**	Yorkshire Beer Engine, Skipton

Signs Of The Times

It's believed that pub signs date back to times when much of the population was illiterate, so that the signs gave a visual indication of the location of alehouses and inns, as well as their names. Sadly, many pubs nowadays do not even have a proper sign, with hand-painted ones in particular being a rarity. In the past, many breweries with a substantial pub estate employed in-house artists to design and paint signs, and to refurbish existing ones. Some of those you may come across can be quite colourful, works of art which catch your eye as is the intention. Add some humour to them, and they are even more likely to be noticed. This was certainly the case with the **Ape And Apple** sign, spotted hanging outside a Holts pub in Manchester during a recent visit there.

The **Lord Nelson** in Ansley village near Nuneaton has this colourful sign depicting that past nautical hero of the nation who masterminded the defeat of Napoleon and those pesky French in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Nautically themed, this pub was originally a sixteenth century farmhouse before becoming a coaching inn. Family-owned and run, it is a popular eatery and beer destination, with the Sperrin brewery situated in an outbuilding at the side of the pub. A varied selection of their beers are available in the pub, plus a couple of guest beers. They also supply some of their beers to the trade.

On Atherstone's quaint and historic market square is the **Market Tavern Tap**. Its new pub sign (right) was designed and painted by a local artist. It complements the older one painted on the frontage of the building. Formerly an Ansell's house called the Cricketers Arms, it was given a change of name when it was bought by the Warwickshire Brewing Company. This presumably is when the original painting was done, given the non-cricketing nature of the scene. Somewhat faded with age, it gives a good rendition of a similar pub from a bygone age. The place has been recently purchased by an enthusiastic couple of local gents who are doing a marvellous and ongoing refurbishment. The pub was this year voted the CAMRA Warwickshire Pub of the Year, a suitable accolade.

Certain signs commemorate historic events, as did the now-gone two-sided sign at the **Bhurtpore Inn** in Aston, Cheshire (now inappropriately renamed as Bhurty). First recorded as a public house in 1778, it had various previous names. In 1826 its name was changed to commemorate the 1825-1826 siege of Bhurtpore in India. The local landowner was the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces there, who were successful in capturing the fort. Popular for its food, the pub serves a regular ale and up to seven guests, plus real cider.

Eric Randall

Tipple Tattle

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

It may not be that original, but it was amusingly novel to us: the four urinals in the Gents at the **Dog Inn** at Nether Whitacre are now labelled as Small, Medium, Large and Liar; take your choice. Decisions are easier at the bar: typically five nice ale choices, with Wye Valley *HPA* and *Butty Bach* as the regulars. A recent showing of Adnams *Double Ghost IPA* was particularly good.

Batham's *Bitter* is now appearing on a near-regular basis in the **Griffin Inn** at Shustoke. Once something of a rarity in our branch area – in part because of the brewery usually only supplying it in 18-gallon casks – we are now seeing much more of this well-loved traditional bitter, and the Griffin presently shifts two 18s a week. All we need now is a regular outlet for the equally good *Mild* ...

There's always a sinking feeling for traditionalists when an otherwise screen-free pub installs a TV. But the good news from Atherstone's **Market Tavern Tap** is that the newly-installed screen, on the bar frontage in the small back room, will be used during colder weather to display a virtual real fire for you to gaze into. There is of course the real thing in the main room, but you may not be able to grab a seat there in this ever-popular pub!

STAFFORDSHIRE

Tamworth beer festival organiser Ian Eason is pictured, right, having the festival's "big cheque" moment at St Giles Hospice. As reported in the last issue, the festival raised a splendid £2175 towards this highly regarded and much-needed community asset. Once again, a big thank you to all of the festival customers who donated, and also to our charity home brewers – Mark Foster, David Jackson and David Nicholls – who generously provided excellent beers free of charge, these beers being available by donation only.

Maybe Tamworth will have a new, or at least rejuvenated, bar by the time you read this. As we went to press there were hopes that the **Hop House** on Market Street would be open by the end of November. The bar (the former Bow Street Runner) will not have cask ale but is expected to offer craft beers at the higher end of the market, and should be a positive addition to Tamworth's beer offerings. Hopefully it will involve a slightly more restrained atmosphere than previous iterations of the place: recently posted pictures of one of the refurbished tables shows clear evidence of dancing on said table!

Good news from the **Sheriff of Tamworth**, which is now featuring a 3pm to 6pm happy hour on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. As part of the offering, cask ales are £2.99 a pint – or £2.84 for CAMRA members given the 5% discount! There are generally three interesting ales on. Be aware that live music features on Saturday and Sunday from 3pm, so choose other times if you prefer a quieter atmosphere.

The long-anticipated and welcome re-opening of the **Bridge Tavern** in Lichfield (the former BitterSuite) took place towards the end of October. The refurbishment by Black Country Ales

(BCA) has dramatically altered the place, with the rooms opened out and expanded, and a longish bar counter installed. There is also a sizeable beer terrace area to the rear. The internal décor is in the familiar and comfortable BCA style. On the bar are four BCA ales (three regular and a seasonal) plus four varied guests, and real cider also features – check out the options on the Real Ale Finder app. The name refers to the Bridge Tavern of old on this site, which closed its doors in 1986. Nearly 40 years later, welcome back!

Top marks to the team at the **Tamworth Tap** for their ghoulish/zombie look over Halloween. Zero marks if you make the obvious joke that you can't tell the difference!

BEYOND THE BORDERS

While the Bridge Tavern in Lichfeidl is the first BCA pub in our branch area, we note that BCA are further expanding in the Midlands, with the acquisition of their first pub in Coventry, the **Nursery Tavern** in Chapelfields. In these troubled times for the pub, industry, it's good to hear of confident operators out there.

Good news from Wolverhampton too, where the middle of Novenber saw the opening of **Perfect Ale Cask Keg**, or PACK for short. Centrally located, it's a former record shop which will be offering 10 cask ales, two of them regular, plus a wide range of keg craft beers.

- *Thanks to contributors Dave N, Adam R, Ian E, Louise G, George G, Eric R*

CAMRA discounts in Nuneaton & Bedworth :

Acorn, Horeston Grange	**10% with membership card**
Attleborough Arms, Attleborough	**10% with membership card**
Bear & Ragged Staff, Bedworth	**CAMRA 50p vouchers**
Chase Hotel, Higham Lane	**10% with membership card**
Crows Nest, Attleborough	**10% with membership card**
Felix Holt, Nuneaton	**CAMRA 50p vouchers**
Fox Inn, Attleborough	**10% with membership card**
Horseshoes, Nuneaton	**10% with membership card**
Miners Arms, Stockingford	**15p/pint with membership card**

All discounts are at the discretion of the licensee and may be withdrawn at any time.

Nuneaton & Bedworth Diary Dates

Wed 10th Dec	Lord Hop 10th Birthday. Celebrating 10 years of Nuneaton's micropub.
Sun 14th Dec	Lord Hop. Official 10th birthday celebration.
Sat 24th Jan	Lichfield social. 10:54 train from Nuneaton to Lichfield, visiting various real ale pubs and returning around 19:00.
Coming	AGM. Date, time & location to be confirmed.

See the branch website for up-to-date details: nuneaton.camra.org.uk

We hope you enjoyed our ... Saintly Saunter

Yes, we hope you enjoyed our Saintly Saunter on the 1st of November – All Saints Day – involving six great ale pubs around Tamworth. We give our thanks to the **Tamworth Tap** for providing snacks along the way, as pictured below. This included the preserved foot of Saint Arnold of Soissons, patron saint of brewing. Though to be honest, it did taste rather more like some classy ham wrapped around some equally tasty soft cheese …

Why not join us for our Xmas crawl, below?

LST XMAS CRAWL

Care to join us for our annual Xmas crawl? We'll be having our usual gentle wander around Lichfield on **Saturday 13th December**, and all are welcome. You can join us from the beginning, or meet up at a pub of your choice! There are plenty of fine pubs around Lichfield, but we've whittled the choices to those below. Our timetable should be roughly as follows:

12:00pm	**Brew City, Essington Close**	(for those keen)
1:00pm	**Bridge Tavern, Upper St John Street**	(main start point)
2:00pm	**Queen's Head, Queen Street**	
2:45pm	**Angel, Market Street**	
	then free-format wander of the Tamworth Street quartet:	
3:30pm	**Whippet Inn, Tamworth Street**	
onwards	**Beerbohm, Tamworth Street**	
	Beacon, Tamworth Street	
	Acorn, Tamworth Street	

Like more information? There's a map on the website, or you can contact us at **LST.Camra@gmail.com**. See you there, join when you like!

Baltic Brews

It's nearly ten years since Tallinn, pretty capital of the northernmost Baltic state of Estonia, has featured in these pages (*Last Orders 67*). Has much changed on the beer scene? As a number of places have closed, and many more have opened up, it's time to to take a look!

It's worth prefacing things by noting that the city has an excellent integrated transport system of buses and trams, easy to use and perfect for exploring the slightly further out places, or simply saving valuable drinking time. Single trips are €2, but (if paying by card) there's a daily cap of €5.50. So with no time to waste …

Perhaps the best known Estonian craft brewery is Põhjala, and a visit to the **Põhjala Brewery & Tap Room**, right, is a must. The large upstairs taproom features 24 taps, only one of which is a guest! You can perch on seats looking down onto the expansive brewery hall, though on a gorgeously sunny October day, the balcony with glowing autumn foliage views was also popular. There is a whole range of styles and strengths – the tongue-numbingly hoppy *Virmalised*, a 6.5% West Coast IPA is one of the big crowd pleasers – but on my visits, the stronger stouts proved dangerously gorgeous. *Tiramisi Bänger* was indeed a 12.5% banger, full of coffee and vanilla and superbly creamy. But it was outdone by *Barrique Noir* at 12%, an imperial Baltic porter with blackcurrant – sumptuously rich and fruity, liquid cake. Come here for a nightcap!

Nearby, the **Brewklyn** is well worth fitting in. Once you've got over the almost psychedelic colour scheme, you'll notice the massive range of cans, plus a limited number in bottle. Many are US imports (the gaffer is from New York city), but there is plenty of Baltic stuff. I go for *Celestial* from Ārpus in Latvia, a stonking 10% brew which absolutely hums with resiny hops and warming alcohol. It also pushes acronym mania to its limit, as it's a QDHTIPA or quadruple dry hopped triple IPA. WTF?

If you need any further excuses to visit the above two, then the nearby Lennusadam maritime museum will happily take you up to opening time and quite possibly beyond. It is quite outstanding, and includes fascinating self-guided tours inside a large submarine, and an equally large steam-powered icebreaker (meremuuseum.ee/en).

A tram is the best option for visiting **Tuletorn Brewing**. Behind an easily-missed anonymous doorway (wooden casks give the game away) is a bright taproom (left), with views into the adjacent brewery. Seven taps showcase the range, plus there's a bottle fridge. Starting light with the *Égoiste* at 4.5% is a good move, it's a raspberry-lemon sour but the addition of tonka beans give it a lovely desserty edge to offset the sourness. The *Blasta* at 6.5% is a perfectly pleasant NEIPA but with no real surprises. There's a mango and passion fruit smoothie which is so healthily fruity that it almost has to be squeezed out of the tap, and despite its 5.5% can hardly be considered beer. Star of the show has to be the *Kirju Koer*, an 11.5 imperial stout, beautifully aromatic with chocolate and fruit, and a splendid raisiny flavour.

Baltic Brews cont.

Kochi Aidad, right, sits near the waterfront where ferries ply their way to Helsinki. It's an interesting conversion of a spacious old stone warehouse, done out in beer hall style, with lots of dark wood and a mezzanine level above. The large circular bar has a gleaming copper mashtun as its centrepiece, with ranks of stainless steel fermenting vessels behind a glass panel. At first glance, it's a temple to beer, but this impression disappears when you open the thick menu, which devotes just one page to beer and then lists only 'house beer' in different sizes – absolutely no information on styles or strengths. There turn out to be seven choices, of which I try the wheat, honey, pale ale and IPA. They're all a bit so-what, only the IPA lifting itself up to average. A shame – it looks like a place with real potential.

Much brighter prospects await in the Telliskivi nightlife area near the rail station. Here there is another outlet for Põhjala, the **Põhja Konn**. This has 20 taps, eight of which are Estonian guests, so it's an opportunity to try some out-of-town guests. Anderson's *It's Britney, Peach* (from the southern town of Tartu) is an interesting NEIPA with peach, which works well. Top slot however goes to a beer from the island of Hiiumaa, Hiiumaa *Rugipukk*. It's a rich brown bock made with rye malt, so it's got the grainy spiciness of rye but overlaid with a splendid sherry-like fruitiness. Far too quaffable for 6.8%.

Just around the corner is the **Vaat Brewery & Taproom**, a narrow brewery tap with a view of the small brewery through glass. Eight brews on tap, and having had some fab dark beers so far, it's surprising to see that they're all pale. But the *Finally!*, a 'micro IPA' at 2.8%, is pretty good, while the *Tallinner Weizen* is a good classic wheat beer in the German mould.

Richer pickings are available just a few hundred yards away, next to the Balti Jaama market hall. **Humalakoda** (Hop House) is a large, two-level place with a garlic-heavy smell of interesting cooking in the air, but the emphasis is on beer. The on-site brewery offers five standard beers, plus seven specials. I ease in with the 5.5% *IPA* (ticks the boxes) while perusing the specials. The *Espresso Macchiato* porter is not the coffee bomb I was expecting, but the *Stranger Peaks* definitely has a wow factor – a Saison style with sage, spruce buds and yarrow! *Eba-humal* claims to be a quince mead, but it's more like a strong (7.5%) honey beer. Two fruit sours – *Banana Frutti* and *Tropi Frutti* – pleasantly round off an excellent tasting session.

Pühaste Brewery of Tartu offers the **Pühaste Taproom Tallinn** just off the town centre. Despite being surrounded by tall modern buildings, it has a stone-built interior which suggests a much older building. Twelve of their own beers are on tap, but it's another place where dark beers don't get a look in. That said, the *Mango Gose* is impressively fruity, while the *Pulss* double dry hopped IPA is delicious, full of fresh and leafy hoppy flavour.

A final place to recommend is **Koht**, a small vaulted-ceiling bar with ten taps and an amazing selection of cans and bottles (around 700) from the adjoining shop. Over a couple of visits sampling a tiny fraction of the range, the highlight was Lehe *Ravnodenstvie*, a stunning barrel aged stout of 12%, rich and sweet with the unmistakeable phenolic twang of Islay whisky.

The LST branch pubs listed here kindly offer real ale discounts to CAMRA members. We offer them our thanks. Show them your support and get the most out of your membership! For further info on the pubs, consult WhatPub

Offering a discount in your pub, or know of one that does? Let us know at LST.Camra@gmail.com and we'll mention it here.

Acorn, Lichfield	50p CAMRA vouchers	
Amington Inn, Amington	10% off	
Andys' Brew House, Streetly	30p/pint, 15p/half	
Angel, Lichfield	20p/pint, 10p/half	
Angel Ale House, Atherstone	20p/pint, 10p/half	
Beerbohm, Lichfield	10p/pint, 5p/half	
Bishop Vesey, Boldmere	50p CAMRA vouchers	
Bole Bridge, Tamworth	50p CAMRA vouchers	
Bottle Of Sack, Sutton Coldfield	50p CAMRA vouchers	
Bowling Green, Lichfield	20p/pint	
Brew City Lichfield, Lichfield	10% off	
Brewhouse & Kitchen, Lichfield	10% off	
Crown, Four Oaks	20p/pint	
Duke of York, Lichfield	20p/pint, 10p/half	
Gamecock, Birchmoor	10p/pint	
George & Dragon, Lichfield	10p/pint	
Green Man, Clifton Campville	10% off	
Hardwick Arms, Streetly	20p/pint	
Hedgehog, Lichfield	20p/pint	
Holly Bush, Little Hay	10% off	
Horse & Jockey, Sutton Coldfield	20p/pint	
Mare Pool, Mere Green	50p CAMRA vouchers	
Market Vaults, Tamworth	10p/pint	
Moat House, Tamworth	20p/pint, 10p/half	
Old Bank House, Tamworth	10p/pint	
Owl At Lichfield, Lichfield	10p/pint	
Penny Black, Tamworth	10% off (or 50p CAMRA vouchers)	
Phoenix, Tamworth	10% off	
Queens Head, Lichfield	10% off	
Queslett, Streetly	20p/pint	
Railway Inn, Whitacre Heath	10p/pint	
Sheriff of Tamworth, Tamworth	5% off	
Sir Robert Peel, Tamworth	10p/pint, 5p/half	(until 6pm)
Station, Sutton Coldfield	10% off	
Tamworth Tap, Tamworth	20p/pint, 10p/half	
Whippet Inn, Lichfield	25p/pint, 10p/half	
White Horse, Curdworth	20p/pint	
White Horse, Whitehouse Common	10% off	
Wigginton, Wigginton	10% off	

Tour Of Non-Destruction

It's fair to say – if not actually a gross understatement – that Whitbread is not remembered fondly by many real ale drinkers of a certain age. Founded in 1742 by Samuel Whitbread, it soon became the largest brewer in London, and later grew by a process of swallowing up smaller breweries which started in the 1920s but reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. It became one of the 'big six' brewery conglomerates in the UK, known primarily for making industrial bog standard beers and leading the push for keg beer domination. It was so disliked by CAMRA that the campaign even produced a "Whitbread Tour Of Destruction" T-shirt, listing the many breweries taken over and closed by Whitbread. And quite apart from the closed breweries, the standard Whitbread beers of the day were the pretty dreadful *Tankard* and *Trophy*, sold primarily on the back of extensive advertising ("the pint that thinks it's a quart"). It was surely a relief when Whitbread decided to exit brewing in 2001-2002, selling its brewing interests to Interbrew (now absorbed into AB Inbev), and its pubs to Enterprise Inns (now swallowed up by Stonegate).

So against this background, with Whitbread relegated to a comfortingly distant bad memory, it was surprising to stumble across some Whitbread-badged buildings in Belgium! The pictured facades are in Brussels, slightly off the beaten track near the Belgica metro station. It seems that while Whitbread never brewed in Brussels, they did have this warehouse complex. The buildings are very well-preserved, now used for other purposes, and the historic signage is in pretty good condition. It's hard to believe that this would be the case in the UK, with such historic facades rapidly binned to make way for the next commercial enterprise. By contrast it appears that the Belgians are much more sensitive to brewing history, even that of other countries!

Looking for real cider in LST branch?

North Warwickshire
Angel Ale House, Atherstone
Bird In Hand, Austrey
Griffin Inn, Shustoke
Market Tavern, Atherstone

Staffordshire
Acorn, Lichfield
Beacon, Lichfield
Bole Bridge, Tamworth
Brew City Lichfield, Lichfield
Brewhouse & Kitchen, Lichfield
Bridge Tavern, Lichfield
King's Ditch, Tamworth
Old Bank House, Tamworth
Sheriff of Tamworth, Tamworth
Sir Robert Peel, Tamworth
Tamworth Tap, Tamworth
Three Tuns, Fazeley
Whippet Inn, Lichfield
WIP, Lichfield

West Midlands
Andys' Brew House, Streetly
Leviathan Tap, Sutton Coldfield

Thank you for reading Last Orders!
Next edition: 1st February 2026.

Contact us at
LST.Camra@gmail.com

or see
www.LST.Camra.org.uk