

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

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or see

www.LST.Camra.org.uk

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LAST Orders

No 115 Feb/Mar 2026

CAMRA membership in Jan: 142,066



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

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Nuneaton & Bedworth
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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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Missing out on Last Orders? We distribute the magazine widely throughout the branch areas, but if you would like to sign up for email delivery (PDF format, approximately 3MB per issue) then please email us

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Nuneaton & Bedworth
CAMRA:
www.nuneaton.camra.org.uk

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Charlotte Richards info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk

Chair Chat

It was great to see so many of you at the National Pub of the Year presentation at the Tamworth Tap last month. It was a real highlight for the branch, and was attended by CAMRA dignitaries and press from all over the UK. Our little branch and the Tamworth Tap have made history!

Surveying for next year's pub of the year is well underway and beer scores are being submitted to make up our branch *Good Beer Guide* entries for 2027.

We're still working on dates for a future coach social trip, so keep a look out for branch emails for details. There has been a continual hike in coach prices like everything these days, so there will be a slight unavoidable increase in the seat price, but it'll be a great value trip! Incidentally, if you have opted out of CAMRA communications you'll need to opt back in to local branch communications to get notifications by email.

From celebrating pubs to saving pubs, at going to press we were still waiting on the anticipated government U-turn on business rates relief. Let's hope it goes far enough. The plight of pubs is sure to be discussed at this year's CAMRA Members weekend in St Albans. It's definitely worth a visit with some great pubs to enjoy around the city.

Cheers and see you around the branch.

George Greenaway, LST Chairman



September: Make A Date

It's early days yet, but here's a date for your diary: Tamworth Beer Festival will be held from Thursday 10th to Saturday 12th of September. As happens roughly every seven years, the festival has moved to a week later than last year; amongst other things, this is so we are not setting up on the August bank holiday Monday.

Other than that, it should be business as normal at the Assembly Rooms: opening at 11am each day, 75 or so ales, and a dozen ciders. The only remaining uncertainty is what our theme will be this year, but rest assured that it'll be something that we can have some fun with!

Tamworth Beer Festival 2026: Thu 10th-Sat 12th September



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If you are on a visit to Newcastle, while enjoying all that this fine northern city has to offer, don't miss crossing over its iconic bridge and river and ganning to Gateshead. They say that the best things come in threes, so while there you can undertake a mini pub crawl to three different and quite distinctive places that are a stone's throw away from each other. All are located a mere ten minutes walk from the Gateshead metro station.

First stop is the **Microbus** micro pub, situated in a railway arch. It's a quirky place with a VW campervan and surfing theme in the interior, as evident in the photo right. Various Volkswagen and surfing memorabilia are on display including the campervan -fronted bar. Live music features occasionally. Beerwise, there are six real ales, ten craft beers and a selection of cans in the fridge. On my visit there were three pale and three dark real ales to tempt me. The Wishbone *Hazer Pin* IPA had a firm malt presence and an assertive earthy hoppiness. The contrasting *Trig Interloper* was an oatmeal porter, distinctly London porter-ish in style, with firm hoppiness, chocolate notes and roast barley bitterness.



The **Central** (left) has the so-called flat iron shape in its design. It dates from the mid 19th century, is Grade II listed and on CAMRA's Historic Interiors register. The interior features wooden floors, ceilings and paneling in the elongated bar. The Buffet Bar and room behind (below) is a delight; as well as the magnificent bar and bar back, it has some large etched glass windows with semi circular stained glass panels at the top. On the first floor there is a snooker room and one for hosting music events. The second floor has a small room with bar and an adjacent roof terrace. On the downstairs bar were five real ales and two real ciders on the hand pulls. Two by Two *Session IPA* was a typically unfiltered NEIPA-style offering, for which this local brewery are renowned. Thirsty Moose *Cocoa Swirl* chocolate stout was a dark delight with dark chocolate notes and a smooth finish.



Station East is operated by the Hadrian & Border brewery. Behind its red brick exterior are stone-flagged floors and stone walls. There is also a separate dungeon-like room on the ground floor. It incorporates some railway arches, as it was once part of the former Gateshead East railway station and hotel. There is an upstairs mezzanine, offering the view pictured left. The many pump clips adorning the walls are evidence of the varied and interesting past offerings in this establishment. Two Hadrian & Border ales were joined by various cask and craft offerings. Wear Beer *Hazy Pale* was just that, fruity and hoppy with a resinous bitterness. Meanwhile, Ardgor *Boc Ban* from Scotland was a golden hued, malty bitter with a rye spiciness.



Eric Randall

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Pub Business Rates – Why Such A Mess?

“We have delivered a £4.3bn support package for pubs, restaurants and cafes because hospitality is a vital part of our economy.”

So said the government after the Autumn budget. But you’d have to be a miracle worker to find publicans anywhere in the land who feel anything other than betrayed after the budget’s changes to business rates (BRs). Rates for an average pub were projected to increase by a massive 76% over the next three years, but the increases very much depend on circumstances, with some facing much larger rises. The government have acknowledged the industry fury and promised to review the situation (i.e. potentially do yet another U-turn) but how on earth did they get into this mess, what is going on? There are three key factors at play:

Rateable values: these are recalculated every three years – but as the last valuations were during the Covid pandemic, many pubs are seeing shocking rises, with 100% not unusual. BRs are directly related to the rateable value. And while the valuation for shops and restaurants is based on market rent, for pubs it is based on the turnover that a “reasonably efficient operator” could make. For pubs which have worked hard to improve their pubs and increase turnover, this is seen as penalising success. Note also that it’s turnover, not profit – and it’s obvious to all that profits are being badly hit by other increasing costs.

The multiplier: the ‘multiplier’ is basically the tax rate, the percentage of the rateable value payable as BR. Recognising that rateable values are increasing, the multiplier is to be reduced; this takes out a little of the sting, but clearly not much given how much BR is rising.

Covid relief withdrawal: in a piece of cruel timing, the 40% BR relief for hospitality introduced during Covid is set to end at the same time as the BR increases from the budget, leading to a double whammy – removal of the 40% discount and an average BR increase of around 30% (but much more than 30% in many cases).

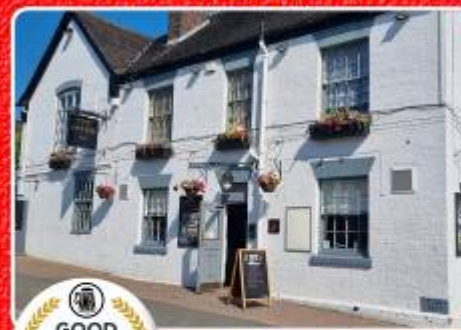
To be fair to the government, the Covid relief was obviously never meant to be permanent. But to remove it at the same time as punishing increases in BRs does not sound like the actions of a government that is sympathetic to the plight of pubs.

They have tried to sugar the pill by the sticking plaster of ‘transitional relief’, which means that the increases will be phased in over three years by means of a percentage cap each year. But even the figures in the cap are tacit admission of the pain that pubs would face; they vary according to rateable value, but 25% per year is typical. Would you feel grateful if one of your key household costs would ‘only’ rise by 25% over each of the next three years?

We’re used to politicians putting a positive spin on things (aka bullshitting), but Rachel Reeves poured petrol on this particular fire by claiming that this budget delivers the “lowest tax rates since 1991” on retail, hospitality and leisure businesses. Hard to credit when your business rates bill may be doubling or worse? But note the weasel words: not the “lowest tax” but the “lowest tax rates”. The multiplier described above may be going down, but that is of no comfort if your overall bill is soaring!

Not surprisingly, publicans across the land are beginning to wonder how much longer their businesses can survive. To the firestorm of increasing costs – energy, national insurance and minimum wage – there is now the prospect of massive increases in BR. Doesn’t a government which claims to recognise the importance of pubs and hospitality need to do better, much better? Hopefully the government have already U-turned by the time you read this!

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NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

We're pleased to note that the **Stute** at Dordon – the former Dordon Institute Social Club if you've not kept up with the name change – has added a handpull, so that it now offers three real ales. Regular *Abbot Ale* has been joined by guests from the Greene King portfolio, plus breweries like Oakham and Downton.

Atherstone's **Market Tavern Tap** has almost turned into the town's history museum, with the introduction of an extensive selection of old pictures of the town. Even residents will find many pictures or scenes that they've not seen before. And plenty of interesting ales and ciders to enjoy of course!

We look forward to the **Cottage Inn** at Fillongley re-opening sometime this year after suffering serious fire damage in 2024. See more on page 30.

STAFFORDSHIRE

We're tickled pink – or whatever colour you fancy – to note that the **Whippet Inn** in Lichfield has a new range of embroidered merchandise available. Beanie hats, hoodies and fleeces are ideal for this time of year, plus there are T-shirts for the warmer weather. The **Tamworth Tap** also offers a wide range of merch, so if your wardrobe could do with a beery refresher, you know where to go. We encourage more pubs to do the same – let's fly the flag for our favourite boozers!



Pleasing news from the **Turnpike** on the edge of Lichfield, where gaffers Shaun & Lisa are keen to expand their cask offerings. As well as *Wainright Gold* (the real version) and *Pedigree*, there are now three or four guests, with *Titanic* featuring strongly – they've gone through most of the *Titanic* range and may feature *Plum Porter* regularly. *Burton Bridge* and *Brains* beers have also popped up – see what's available on Real Ale Finder. The pub is still tied to Marston's, but Shaun & Lisa are essentially tenants – i.e. they have to make the numbers add up through their own efforts – rather than salaried managers. This arrangement gives them more freedom on the ale front, which they're clearly exploiting. There is an ale discount for CAMRA members, though this does not apply on Tuesdays when ales are £3 a pint throughout the day.

The **Hop House** on Market Street in Tamworth opened in early December. The bar (the former Bow Street Runner) has eight craft taps with some interesting choices. Unusually – unique in the branch area we think – there is no cask ale but real cider is available, typically four of the bag-in-a-box variety. The craft and cider offerings are visible on the Real Ale Finder app. The pub is a single room, simply decorated, with some booths for seating. The place is closed on Monday and Tuesday, and opens from 5pm Wednesday to Friday, noon on Saturday and Sunday.

Nearby, the **Old Bank House** had a trial batch of the reinvented *Boddingtons Bitter*, and found it sold so well that the ale is now permanent, the first ever-present beer that the place has had. A popular cask ale in the 1970s when it was the flagship beer of the Boddingtons brewery in Manchester, '*Boddies*' in cask is now made under licence by JW Lees as of 2025. Boddingtons was one of those casualties of the Whitbread 'tour of destruction', taken over in

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Tipple Tattle cont.

1989. The brand is now owned by AB InBev, who have at least allowed a Manchester brewery to make it once again.

WEST MIDLANDS

We note that Sutton Coldfield Civic Society are hosting a talk on 'Beers and Breweries of the Black Country' by Keith Hodgkins of Tipton Civic Society. This takes place from 7.30pm on Thursday 12th February at the usual venue, the Trinity Centre on Church Hill (B72 1TF). They've also hosted talks by the Inn Sign Society, so worth keeping an eye on their schedules if this floats your boat.

BEYOND THE BORDERS

Great news from Coventry, where the CAMRA beer festival returns this year after a two year absence. March looks to be when beer festival season returns with a bang locally: you have Loughborough, Burton and Coventry to look forward to! See the fest listings on page 31.

We're sad to note that the **Weighbridge Inn** in Burton closed abruptly in early January; no reason was given at the time. First opened as a pub only in 2015 (and then called the Middle Earth Tavern), it's been through a number of hands, most recently ran by Muirhouse Brewery for the last six years. It's a cosy little place, let's hope someone takes it on.

Brighter news from Wolverhampton, where a new brewery is slated to open this year, quite fitting given last year's brutal closure of Banks's Brewery, courtesy of Carlsberg Marston's. The brewery is to be known as Springbanks, presumably a nod to both Banks's and Wolverhampton's former Springfield Brewery, which closed in the 1990s. The new outfit look to be thinking big and with an eye to heritage and experimentation, as they are reported to be taking delivery of a Burton Union set. The set – an example of the fermentation system once held in high esteem in Burton, with a set recently put back into service by Thornbridge brewery – was, ironically, disposed of by Carlsberg Marston's. Maybe the accountants at Carlsberg Marston's are not the best guardians of the nation's breweries and brewing heritage?



Birmingham's Indian Brewery will be opening an outlet in Birmingham Airport's departures area. Slated for a Christmas 2025 opening, it has clearly slipped a bit, but hopefully it will be worth waiting for. It will offer Indian 'street food' (which includes offbeat things like bacon naan sandwiches) and craft beer. It's hard to believe that cask beer will also be included in the offerings, but we live in hope!

• Thanks to contributors Adrian S, David T, Adam R, David N

Mini Quiz

You're going to the toilet in Estonia. Typically, you've left it a bit late, so it's a bit urgent! Then you see that the two doors are marked as follows. Quick decision, which one do you take? Answer on page 14!



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Nuneaton & Bedworth Awards 2025

At the start of December 2025, I handed out the end of year awards for the Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA branch. First up is one for the **Royal Oak** located on Arbury Road in the Stockingford area of Nuneaton. Tammi and Jason have been operating the pub for over a year, having their first anniversary at the pub in September 2025. They hold very successful quiz nights and other events. The pub lists its choices on the Real Ale Finder app, and are now serving five cask ales, up from four. They have been awarded Most Improved Pub of the Year 2025, instantly taking pride in achieving this accolade and placing it on display behind the bar.



Next we move to the **Miners Arms** on Whittleford Road, also in Stockingford. Tim Healy and the team have been here for over a year also, celebrating their first anniversary in August 2025. They regularly have live entertainment, karaoke and quiz nights, while also raising money for local charities. The Miners is another pub that uses the Real Ale Finder app. The pub has become a popular locals' pub and has taken the crown of Community Pub of the Year 2025.



Last but definitely not least is the Special Award for Charity Fundraising 2025. Once again, Matt Sherrington at the **Horseshoes** in Nuneaton has gone above and beyond with the charity work! This year Matt and a team of



regulars took it to the skies for Myton Hospices by abseiling down Coventry Cathedral. Alongside this, Matt has also walked the length of Offa's Dyke solo in seven days, as well as winning best float at Nuneaton's Carnival. At the Horseshoes, live music, events and quiz nights have been held throughout the year and he just doesn't stop, with a charity skydive planned for 2026! Keep up the good work, well-done!

A big congratulations to all our award winners, and please continue to support your local pubs, clubs and breweries through these hard times. Oh, and don't forget to continue to submit those all important beer scores. Cheers!

Charlotte Richards, Nuneaton & Bedworth chair

Mini Quiz

Toilet in Estonia, male or female? If you're lucky, they may be marked something like the following. Helpful in your hour of need? Or more likely, few seconds of need!



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The Miracle On Market Street Third Time Win!



To corrupt a well-known phrase, they say that lightning never strikes the same place three times. This was proved spectacularly wrong in mid January, when the amazing news came that our very own **Tamworth Tap** had gone on to win CAMRA's National Pub of the Year – for a stunning third time! The Tap took the national title in 2022 and 2023, so this win for 2025 means that the pub has gone on to take a unique place in CAMRA's history books – the only pub to win the national title on three occasions, so truly unprecedented.

Only four other pubs in the UK have won the title twice: the **Bell Inn** at Aldworth (1990, 2019), the **Fat Cat** in Norwich (1998, 2004), the **Swan** at Little Totham (2002, 2005), and the **Kelham Island Tavern** in Sheffield (2008, 2009).

What makes the Tap's triple winning streak even more remarkable it that the pub opened its doors during Christmas 2017, and so celebrated only its eighth birthday a few months ago! What better testament to the hard work and vision of gaffers George and Louise Greenaway, plus the outstanding efforts of their dedicated team of staff?

The competition was a long one, starting in March 2024 and involved multiple stages of judging by many different individuals. The process kicks off at branch level, with the 200 or so CAMRA branches across the UK choosing their local Pub of the Year – or in the case of LST branch, which has territory in three counties, a branch Pub of the Year for each county. These 200-odd pubs are then whittled down to a final winner by a number of rounds of judging, as described in the panel at the bottom: county, regional, and so on. Each successive round is assessed by a different set of judges, with the final rounds involving regional directors and members of CAMRA's National Executive. So the final winner is judged by many different pairs of eyes – and many thirsty but critical palates!

From the final four, only a winner is declared, there is no ranking of the remainder, but we should pay tribute to those worthy adversaries across the country: the **Blackfriars Tavern** in Great Yarmouth, the **Pelican** in Gloucester, and the **Volunteer Arms** at Musselburgh just outside Edinburgh. Well done to them for getting so far, and best of luck for this coming year's competition! The Blackfriars Tavern can also console itself with winning the National Cider Pub of the Year for 2025.

The long path to the top ...

Branch round – LST branch vote for branch Staffordshire POTY

➡ **wins LST Staffordshire POTY**

County round – goes up against eight other Staffordshire branch pubs

➡ **wins Staffordshire POTY**

Regional round – goes up against the three other county winners in the West Midlands

➡ **wins West Midlands Regional POTY**

Super regional round – goes up against the fifteen other regional winners in the UK

➡ **enters the 'final four'**

Final four round – the Tap is selected first of the four

➡ **wins National Pub of the Year!**

After the presentation of the award by national CAMRA chairman Ash Corbett-Collins, owner George marvelled at winning this national accolade. “Well, this really is amazing. We didn't expect to win it the first time, didn't expect to win the second, and for it to come knocking on the door a third time – I still can't get over it! We always hoped to win of course, the pub is our pride and joy, but it still doesn't feel real. It was great that we had excellent competition, a tribute to the many wonderful pubs across the country. Thanks too to the people of CAMRA for putting in all the voluntary effort to make this competition work.”

The pub today is very much the result of the dedicated work of George & Louise, but both were keen to emphasise the role of others. As Louise put it, “We obviously do a lot behind the scenes, but this pub works because of its customers and staff. We have dedicated regulars who support everything that we do, but we also welcome lots of great visitors – we want them to enjoy the pub in the same way that we do. And we are exceptionally proud of our dedicated staff, Team Tap, who go above and beyond. We are very much into developing and training but it's a key thing. We expect a lot from our staff, but they deliver in spades, so our big thanks to them; our win is their win too.”

So what shall we expect in the coming year? “It'll be another busy one – watch this space!” said George. “But we hope to see more people coming to town as a result of this win, both to visit us and the many other excellent pubs in town.”

[George and Louise \(right of picture\) with some of the members of Team Tap. Our warmest congratulations to them all!](#)



Bargain Beer Tasting

My beer guardian angel was looking after me when she artfully steered me towards the **Sheriff of Tamworth**, at a time when the place was disposing of its Belgian bottled beer stock at a flabbergasting £2 a bottle! Among my haul was the full range of beers from Rochefort, a Trappist monastery brewery which resurrected brewing in 1899. They're all strong beers, so a dark and damp winter evening gave a nice excuse to go through them. The range, each with a distinctive colour-coded crown cap, right, are the long-established 6, 8 and 10, plus the 2020 whippersnapper of *Triple Extra*.

With beery logic, we start on the 6, the weakest. The numbers are not the ABV, but are instead an old Belgian measure of original gravity, similar to the Plato system used in the Czech Republic. So it's a 7.5% brew to start! It's light brown, with a honey palate and hints of candy sugar, but it does develop an enjoyable bitterness with a gentle spicy edge. It's lightweight in flavour for its strength, but there's an unmistakable warmth from the alcohol.

The 8 is a darker brown, and a much richer flavour – raisiny fruitiness, no evident candy sugar, and a more assertive bitterness on the finish. Surprisingly, there's little alcohol burn despite the strength having leapt to 9.2%; you'd find it hard to guess its strength from the taste, even if you might deduce it afterwards! This is apparently their biggest seller, far out-pacing the relatively rare 6.

After two similar beers, it's time for a palate reset, with the *Triple Extra* at a mere 8.1%. This 2020-launched brew differentiates itself with a crown cap carrying the monastery's motto of *Curvata Resurgo*. The brewery website scores an own goal by translating this as "bent over, I stand up straight", adding an unintended dose of *double entendre*. Something like "resilience in the face of adversity" would maybe be better, they can have that for free.

Anyway! The beer is a pale golden brew, and certainly adds some much-needed variety to the range. The brewery website claims that it's "the only ale in the range", but as all of the beers are top-fermented and so technically ales, something has again got added in translation. The beer is very much in the golden triple style, with a malty but not cloying body, and a nicely assertive bitterness with evident hop character. At this sort of strength though, I think I'd prefer a *Duvel* or a *Westmalle Tripel*, but it's a decent effort.

With the cumulative effects of the alcohol kicking in, it's time to finish off with the show-stopper 10 at a stonking 11.3%. This is surely the beer which gave Rochefort its reputation, as 10 is a fearsome beast. It's a near-opaque dark brown brew, with a splendidly fruity aroma and a chewily gorgeous body, packed with heavy dark-fruit flavours. The alcohol is also way more evident, almost resinous in its numbing tongue feel.

Quite an evening of drinking for a mere £8. But it does make me look forward to my next pint of cask ale in a pub – similar levels of enjoyment but at about a third of the ABV!



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Tue 7th Apr, 7.30pm, Boldmere Tap, Sutton Coldfield

Beerelativity

A Christmas visit to the pub provided a eureka moment – a fundamental reinterpretation of two of the most famous scientific theories of the twentieth century! For while both special and general relativity have been validated by experimental measurement, it has long been a frustration that a unified ‘theory of everything’ has yet to be arrived at: something incorporating quantum-mechanical concepts, and latterly, the mysterious ideas of dark matter. However, after consuming rather too much dark matter – North Riding *Fudge Brownie Stout*, a gorgeous 7.4% stonker – everything became clear on the way to the rail station to get home.

The first revelation is that the time dilation of special relativity – the idea that time slows down as you move more quickly – is profoundly affected by dark matter. This causes time to actually *speed up* as you go faster. The more you attempt to speed up, the quicker time goes, and the less likely you are to catch the train. It became apparent too that dark matter also changes the way in which spacetime is curved, so that straight lines in one inertial frame (the *sober* frame) become considerably more warped in the *dark matter-affected* frame. It’s also evident that the curvature of spacetime is highly localised and variable, leading to the relativistic effect that observers in different inertial frames will observe different things. This is characterised by the observer in the *dark matter-affected* frame travelling in a perfectly straight line, but the observer in the *sober* frame seeing a large-scale version of Brownian motion, seemingly random movements on a continual basis.

Beerelativity, you saw it here first. Just need a bit of maths, a publication or two in *Nature* or *Royal Society Proceedings*, and the Nobel Prize committee will be banging on the door!

Imperial? Not Even Regal

Belgian beer fans will be very familiar with *Duvel*, the 8.5% flagship brand of the Duvel Moortgat empire. Strong and golden with a superbly rounded bitterness, it’s extremely quaffable as many will have discovered to their peril. And despite Duvel Moortgat being a growing and acquisitive business (it owns Chouffe, Vedett and many other Belgian and worldwide breweries), it has largely remained one of the ‘good guys’, focussing on quality and development, rather than buy-and-close as in the demon years of Whitbread. A case in point is the arrival of the superb 9.5% *Duvel Tripel Hop*, after years of experimentation.



So there was much anticipation with the latest limited edition, *Duvel Imperial Blond*, a 10% monster. Slightly darker than standard *Duvel*, the hype promised much. Sadly however, it’s just, well – a total miss, frankly. It was like going back to the old days of Belgian beer stereotypes, with their image of being just strong and candy sugar-sweet. This is very much in the same camp, with alcoholic sweetness to the fore and not much else going on. The bottle label makes no mention of hops, quite different to the fanfare which went on with the various iterations of *Triple Hop* before they settled on Citra (and guest appearances of Cashmere).

Full marks to Duvel for experimenting with something new, but it will surely be back to the drawing board after this one.

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Circular E-Con-omy?

Familiar with KeyKegs? They're a popular container for many small indie beer producers. They function in a similar way to normal kegs – you push CO₂ (or any available gas) into the container and beer in turn is pushed out. But their structure means that the gas does not actually come into contact with the beer: there's a rigid plastic outer shell, an inner flexible plastic bag containing the beer, and the gas is injected between the two, essentially squeezing the inner bag to expel its contents.

This means that KeyKegs can in principle be used to contain real ale: the external CO₂ does not come into contact with the beer. The brewer does however need to ensure that what goes into the inner bag is not too lively, otherwise it can then be simply difficult to dispense (so-called 'fobbing' at the tap), or explosive in the worst case! This maybe explains why so few KeyKegs are in practice used for live beer.

So far so good. But has it crossed your mind where old KeyKegs go? Steel casks simply end up back at the brewery for refilling, but it seems that many old KeyKegs end up with other uses – despite the blandishment on the side of them (right): *tap into the circular economy*. The most popular use does indeed seem to be stools as per the photo, but these must surely have reached saturation point by now. Other enterprising souls – presumably begging empty ones from publicans – have made mini greenhouses, aquariums, lamps and home-brew fermenting vessels, but that is hardly what could be sensibly described as a circular system!

So to what extent are KeyKegs 'circular'? Or is the circular economy statement just a form of greenwashing? To many producers, the containers are intentionally one-way; you can send a batch of beer to Italy for example and not be cared about getting the containers back, plus have a lower shipping weight compared to metal. The one-way cost is passed on to the customer – one reason why such beers are generally so expensive. KeyKeg say that "raw materials from empty KeyKegs are reusable for new plastic kegs." Which is a mealy-mouthed way of saying that they're not reused as they are, but go through a typical recycling process, just like a tin can: labour and energy to both break the product down and re-manufacture a new one. That's assuming the empty container even finds its way to an appropriate facility. Or, like so many, becomes just another not-that-comfortable stool ...



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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.

NEW below means new since the previous issue

Acorn, Lichfield	50p CAMRA vouchers
Amington Inn, Amington	10% off
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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
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Tamworth Tap, Tamworth	20p/pint, 10p/half
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Whippet Inn, Lichfield	25p/pint, 10p/half
White Horse, Curdworth	20p/pint
White Horse, Whitehouse Common	10% off
Wigginton, Wigginton	10% off

Quiz Time

It's quiz time again, so put your phone away and see how you do with this selection. It's for fun only – points do not mean prizes! Answers on page 27.

- 1 Which much-loved brewery is located by the **Vine** pub in Brierley Hill? Bonus point if you can also recall the pub's alternate name.
- 2 Not too far away, the **Beacon Hotel** at Sedgley is also home to a famous brewery. What is the brewery called, and what is its flagship beer?
- 3 Which famous Belgian beer is served in a distinctive round-bottomed glass, similar to a miniature yard of ale?
- 4 Brewers have their own idiosyncratic name for brewing water. What do they call it?
- 5 Name Britain's highest pub, at 1,732 feet above sea level
- 6 In a sly piece of marketing, US *Budweiser* makes a virtue of adding a cheap grain to the mash. What is that ingredient?
- 7 What is Britain's oldest brewery, having been continuously in operation since 1698?
- 8 In the thirsty Northern Territory of Australia, what was a Darwin stubby?
- 9 What did the CAMRA acronym stand for in the early days of the organisation?
- 10 What do tegeologists do?
- 11 What is the famous beer style of Berlin?
- 12 If you see the initials FV in a brewery, what do they mean?
- 13 Which malt variety is widely recognised as the best by British brewers? And which heritage variety is making something of a comeback?
- 14 Which widely available beer, now brewed by Greene King, is named after a car?
- 15 Which part of the UK has a beer purity act similar to Germany's Reinheitsgebot, specifying that only certain ingredients may be used in brewing?
- 16 Which San Francisco brewery, sadly closed recently, popularised 'steam beer'?
- 17 The **Crown Liquor Saloon**, a magnificent Victorian gin palace owned by the National Trust, is located in which UK city?
- 18 In brewing terminology, what is a gyle?
- 19 What is the country of origin of *Carling*?
- 20 In 1946, which author enthused about the ideal characteristics of a pub, calling it the **Moon Under Water**? And which pub chain uses this name across the UK?
- 21 What is the first name of the founder of *Guinness*?
- 22 Which Welsh brewery, still operating, was the first to can beer in the UK?
- 23 The first printing of CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide* was pulped on the advice of lawyers because it advised avoiding a particular beer "like the plague". Which beer?
- 24 Which still-functioning pub is the location and title of a Daphne du Maurier novel?
- 25 What country does Cooper's *Sparkling Ale* come from? Bonus point if you can name the city as well.



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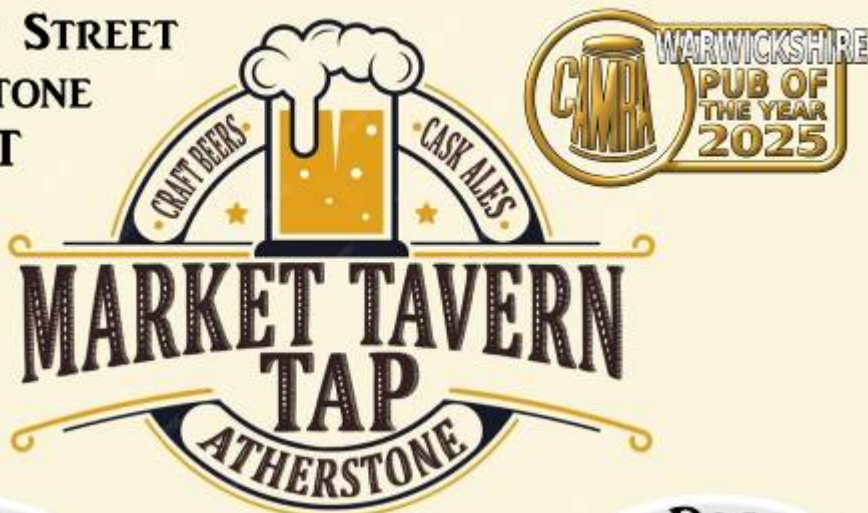
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Quiz Answers

Answers to the quiz on page 24 are below. How did you do?

- 1 The **Vine** in Brierley Hill is the home of Bathams brewery, and the pub is commonly known by its alternate name of the **Bull & Bladder**.
- 2 Meanwhile, the **Beacon Hotel** at Sedgley hosts the Sarah Hughes brewery, whose most well-known beer is of course *Dark Ruby Mild*.
- 3 *Kwak*, from Bosteels brewery, is served in a mini yard of ale. The glasses are so “collectable” that you may be asked to surrender a shoe as a deposit in Belgian bars!
- 4 Brewing water is known as *liquor* by brewers. This is supposedly to distinguish it from the other uses of water in a brewery, primarily in cleaning.
- 5 The **Tan Hill Inn** is Britain’s highest pub, situated near Swaledale in Yorkshire.
- 6 US *Budweiser* is made with rice. We say US, but the stuff swigged from the bottle by ‘cool’ yooof in the UK is actually made in factories in Wales and Lancashire.
- 7 Shepherd Neame of Kent is Britain’s oldest *continuously* operating brewery, but top marks if you thought of Three Tuns in Shropshire, which first brewed in 1642.
- 8 The Darwin stubby was a giant four-pint glass bottle, sadly discontinued in 2015.
- 9 CAMRA was initially the Campaign for the *Revitalisation* of Ale.
- 10 Tegestologists collect beer mats; Morecambe & Wise were big fans of the hobby.
- 11 Berlin is famous for *Berliner Weisse*, a low ABV, gently sour, witbier.
- 12 FV means fermenting vessel, with vessels numbered to track the progress of brews.
- 13 Maris Otter malt is the choice of most brewers, but the much older Chevallier malt is developing a following among some artisanal brewers.
- 14 *Old Speckled Hen* was the nickname for a particular MG saloon made in 1927.
- 15 The Isle of Man has the Pure Beer Act of 1874, slightly relaxed in 1999 to allow the production of fruit and wheat beers.
- 16 Anchor of San Francisco were known for their *Steam Beer*, but sadly closed in 2023.
- 17 The **Crown Liquor Saloon** is in Belfast.
- 18 A gyle is one full brew length, producing a number of casks.
- 19 *Carling*, originally *Carling Black Label*, was first made in Canada.
- 20 George Orwell described his (fictional) ideal pub, the **Moon Under Water**, and it appears that only JD Wetherspoon has adopted this name for a number of its pubs.
- 21 Arthur Guinness both invented the famous stout and founded the brewery.
- 22 Felinfoel first canned beer in 1935, using a container looking like a Brasso tin but with a crown cap to seal it.
- 23 CAMRA suggested that Watney beers should be avoided like the plague, generating so much publicity that the reprinted *Good Beer Guide* was a runaway success!
- 24 Daphne du Maurier’s *Jamaica Inn* was published in 1936.
- 25 Cooper’s *Sparkling Ale* is made in Adelaide, Australia.

The Weiner Takes It All

It's near to closing time when I check into my hotel in Vienna – Wien to the locals – so it's straight out to get my first taste of Vienna craft at the closest place, **AmmutsOn Craft Beer Dive**. It is indeed a gloomy place, but the electronic board has a dozen decent choices, so I go for a couple of quick choices from the Bierol brewery in the west of Austria, a mango IPA and a double-dry-hopped IPA. They hit the spot, but the prices! €9 for a 0.4 litre measure in a place describing itself as a dive is going to make this an expensive trip!



Thankfully it proves to be the exception, with around €6 for 0.5l being more common. This is the case at **Siebenstern Bräu**, left, whose grand frontage leads into a subterranean brewery-cum-restaurant, a cosy spot where you can sit at the bar if you want to take in the showcase brewery. I strike it lucky in here with the *31er Helles*, celebrating their 31st anniversary. This is a brilliant helles, unfiltered with a strong, earthy bitterness but lots of chewy maltiness besides. I go on to the standard pale *Bock*, which is also laudable, though to me it tastes more like a Belgian tripel. The only minor disappointment is the *Märzen*, pleasant enough but a bit too treacly for me.

Mel's Diner offers an unusual combo, a burger/sandwich bar with excellent beer choices. 30 taps have a couple of yawny multinationals but plenty of Austrian and international beers too. There's also an impressive range of bottles, even including the complete Samuel Smith's portfolio! I spot a rare prize among the bottles, a bargain-priced Engelszell *Benno*. This is from Austria's only Trappist brewery which closed two years ago; with only four remaining monks the monastery had to shut up shop. The bottle is out of date (no surprise!) but drinks well, a strong toffeeish amber-brown beer. Amazingly, there are also two handpulls in here, with one seeming to be in use – which it is, but with Westons cider! Maybe not ...

It's worth the tram ride to the Gleis Garten hall. It's an old lofty warehouse turned into a really cosy place, with muted lighting, varied seating on different levels, and fake palm trees feeling strangely appropriate. A bit like a fancy food court, there are about ten food vendors, but pride of place in one corner goes to the **Vienna Kraft** brewpub, pictured right. At least ten large fermenting vessels hide in the gloom, while the bar offers seven draught choices. Three different beers sampled here were all good, with star of the show probably best given to the *Red IPA*, glowing red-amber and clearly a rye beer, beautifully spicy with plenty of fresh hoppiness.



Close by is the cutely named **Schnauzer & Beagle Taproom**, rated a near-perfect 4.9 on Google maps, but any magic it has wasn't working for me. It's a nice enough, comfortable brewpub, but the beers I had were not likely to escape their leash. *Black Butch* was a sweet and overly thin oatmeal milk stout, while *Fleabag Lager* had little bite. Unless I was simply unlucky, maybe a final trip to the vets is in order ...

Also closeish and failing to impress was **Bräuhaus Ten.Fifty**. A two-storey brewpub, it had

The Weiner Takes It All cont.

five beers on draught but all in the modern pale-hoppy style. You'd expect a 10th anniversary brew to be pretty good though? The *10er Helles* was as dull as they come, slightly lemony but almost nothing else going on.

Things improved considerably the following day, with an early visit to a little suburban gem, **Medl-Bräu**. A modest frontage hides a sprawling rustic interior, suffused with the gloriously grainy aroma of brewing from the on-site brewery, pictured right. I expected to have the place to myself shortly after the 10am opening time, but the bar was humming! And after getting somewhat tired of pale-and-hoppy elsewhere, it was pleasing to see some solidly traditional stuff: *Helles*, *Dunkles*, *Märzen* and *Bock*. The 7.4% *Bock* was too much for breakfast time, but the other three were commendable. Many of the punters were in hi-viz clothing, but whether it was pre- or post-shift went unasked ...



Having taken on sufficient Dutch/Austrian courage, it was time for a visit to the Prater amusement park, a vintage version of Alton Towers dating from 1895. The highlight among the amazing range of rides is surely the Prater Tower, a hanging chair carousel which rises to 117m and whizzes round at 60 km/h. Brilliant views once your anxiety attack has subsided!

For a reward, it's a visit to **Wieden Bräu**. It's clear that Vienna had a little boom in showcase brewpubs in recent decades, and this is another example. The anonymous street-corner setting hides a large but intimate interior, with the brewkit occupying a prime spot. The six beers on offer include a pumpkin seasonal which is surprisingly balanced: pumpkin and cinnamon, but enough malty hoppiness to stop it getting silly. The *Weizen* also proved pretty good, nicely authentic.



A busy, noisy, dimly lit, sports-TV bar that I thought I'd hate as soon as I stepped through the door was **1516 Brewing Company**, left. But once cosily seated at the bar, with a front-row view of the brewing kit, everything slotted into place. Ten of their own beers on tap, attentive service, and a surprisingly wide food menu despite it being largely a perch-on-tall-stools sort of place. Among the selection is *Wölsch Transformer*, supposedly "a Kölsch in disguise". The disguise works quite effectively, because unlike an actual Kölsch, it has some flavour – plenty of floral and lemony hops. I also try the *Victory Hop Devil IPA*, a collaboration with Victory of Pennsylvania.

Let's finish with a bar which, by contrast, I should have loved but just couldn't get on with. The **Känguru** is again a dimly lit, but peaceful place, with a front room featuring a semi-circular bar with a wood-and-mirror bar back. There are seven interesting taps, and an even more intriguing list of bottled beers from many countries, plus the food choices look pretty good. But why is the place so sodding dark for heaven's sake? I imagine they're aiming at a gas-lit vibe but they seem to have gone for birthday-cake-candle level! Eating food in the dark is not normal, and phone-light flashes as people struggled to read beer menus defeated the object. I would have liked to stop longer in this final-night venue, but getting out onto the well-lit street was an unusual relief!

A Contrasting Tale Of Two Taverns

Friday the 10th of May 2024 had been pretty much like any other day at the **Cottage Inn**, Fillongley. That was until the peace and tranquility of rural life was torn apart by a fire alarm activation. The first-floor living accommodation was filled with smoke and it was apparent that there was a problem. Luke Bratchie swiftly sprang into action and got his family out of the building to safety and summoned the fire brigade.

By the time the fire services had arrived the fire had spread through the living quarters above the kitchen. It wasn't until the clear light of day that the extent of the damage, including a partial collapse of the roof, was apparent. The subsequent fire investigation concluded that the blaze had started from the residual heat in an unplugged tumble drier and quickly spread throughout the building.



It was thought that this would be the end of the Cottage, until an Asset of Community Value was granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council, delaying the owners from selling the property and enabling an opportunity for a community group to purchase the former Stonegate pub-restaurant. Towards the end of 2025 news came that it had been sold, to local people, and they were going to restore it to its former glory, with a few minor upgrades to make it more disabled friendly, with the aim of being able to reopen for business mid-2026.



Photographs of the ongoing restoration can be found on their Facebook page *The Cottage Inn at Fillongley* or their Instagram account *the_cottage_inn_fillongley*.

After standing derelict and unloved for over 20 years, the **Kingsholme** in Nuneaton, formerly the **Coach & Horses**, has finally had last orders called on it, and has been demolished.

Dating back to the 1860s, the pub was owned by the Hastelow family and at that time had its own brewhouse. It was later acquired by the Lichfield brewery, and then the Flowers brewery, before becoming an Ansells pub in the early 1900's.

The Coach, as it was affectionately called, was one of the 28 pubs in Nuneaton that made up the famous 'Abbey Street Run'. In more recent times the buildings have been plagued by anti-social behaviour, including several arson attacks and drug-related activities.

Barry Everitt



Coach & Horses then ...



Kingsholme latterly ...

Local Festival Diary

Festivals with a **bold heading** are CAMRA festivals, where entrance is free to CAMRA members. Why not join? Go to camra.org.uk/join



5-7th February, 29th Tewkesbury Winter Ales Festival

The Watson Hall, Barton Street, GL20 5PX

70+ winter ales, ciders and perries. Thu 7-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-8.

5-7th March, 49th Loughborough Beer Festival

Polish Club, True Lovers Walk, LE11 3DB

55+ real ales plus ciders, perries, keykeg. Hot & cold food. Thu & Sat 12-10, Fri 12-10.30.

19-21st March, Burton & South Derbyshire Beer & Cider Festival

Burton Town Hall, King Edward Place, DE14 2EB

100+ ales, ciders and craft keg. Live music Fri & Sat. Thu & Fri 12-11, Sat 12-10.

27-28th March, 40th Coventry Beer Festival

Coventry Rugby Football Club, Butts Road, CV1 3GE

50 cask & keg beers plus ciders, perries. Fri & Sat 12-10.30.

Holding a beer festival? Let us know and we will advertise the event here free of charge. Details to LST.Camra@gmail.com

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

- Sat 21st February **Coventry Social**. Starting at the **Broomfield Tavern** at midday then heading to the **Town Wall Tavern**, **Old Windmill**, **Hops d'Amour**, and **Triumph Brewhouse**. (We will start at the **Nursery Tavern** if the venue has reopened in time then move on to the **Broomfield Tavern**).
- Sat 14th March **Branch AGM**
Lord Hop, Nuneaton at 18:00. AGM and election of officers for the upcoming year. Vacancies exist for all committee roles. Contact chair@nuneaton.camra.org.uk for more info or to nominate yourself for a role & attend the meeting.

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



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TUESDAY : CLOSED
WED-THU : 4-10

FRIDAY : 2-11.30
SATURDAY : 12-11.30
SUNDAY : 12-10