



LAST ORDERS

No 116 Apr/May 2026

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

Contact us at

LST.Camra@gmail.com

or see

www.LST.Camra.org.uk

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Inside: *Pink Elephants*
Burton Ale Trail
Election Advice
Yet Another F-A-l-lure

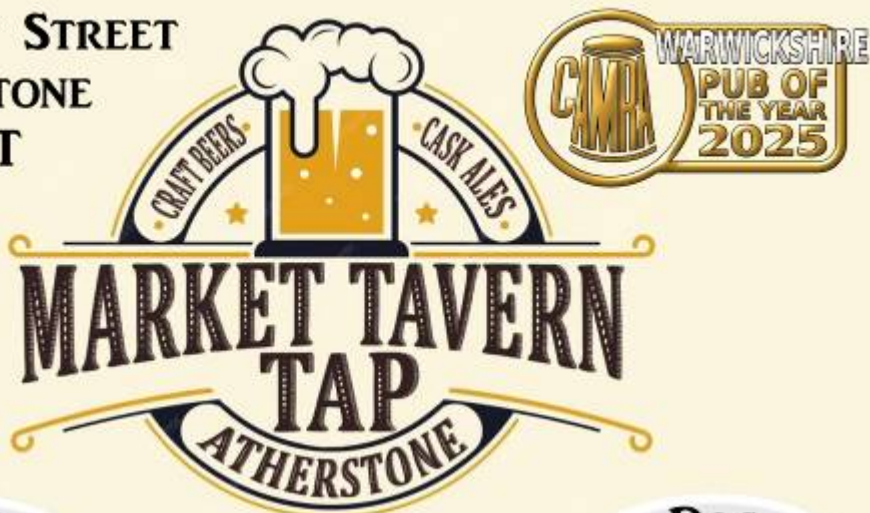
POTyS declared
Malaga Meander
Mother's Pride
North London Circular

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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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PER-ISSUE ADVERTISING RATES:

Quarter page: £30
Half page: £45
Full page: £80

You can provide your own artwork (around 300 dpi for the best results) or we provide a free design service. 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 largest picture of the front cover shows branch members Martin Watts and Brent Adams discovering that drinking Chouffe Belgian beers transforms you into prototype Santa Clauses.

Taken by Louise Greenaway during a Chouffe tasting evening at the [Tamworth Tap](#).



Nuneaton & Bedworth
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Chairman/Branch contact:
Charlotte Richards info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk

Chair Chat

It was an honour to be re-elected as branch Chair for the 12th year at our AGM in March. Our branch continues to grow and prosper. Congratulations and thank you to our full committee who were all unanimously re-elected. Their hard work keeps our branch thriving.

I will continue to take advantage of our recent high profile exposure in the press and campaign further for a better deal for pubs and clubs, specifically through rate reform. I'll represent our branch at regional level and attend national events such as the Members' Weekend, which is being held in St Albans from the 17th April. Hope to see some of you there.

Our local beer gardens are opening as we see the first signs of spring and our first social trip of the year will see us heading to the north Oxfordshire area. Branch members should have received an email detailing the trip. If you haven't please check your contact settings in your CAMRA members area: remember to select receive local communications.

Congratulations to all of our branch pub of the year winners (page 22). They now go on to represent our branch at county level. Just a reminder to contact our editor should you have any pub/club news that we can print, promote on our socials, or support in any way we can.

As ever, look forward to seeing you around the branch.

George Greenaway, LST Chairman



Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA AGM 2026

The Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA Annual General Meeting was held once again at the **Lord Hop** micropub in Nuneaton on 14th March. The proceedings were overseen by Mark Parkes, West Midlands Deputy Regional Director.

Reports were presented by the outgoing committee members, with specific reference to the poor attendance at branch events, which has been particularly disheartening to the organisers. It was noted though that events which took place outside of the Nuneaton & Bedworth branch area attracted more enthusiasm.

Membership, nationally, was reported at just over 143,000, down by 5.1% from the end of 2024, with Nuneaton & Bedworth currently standing at 367 members (down by 20 over the year, in line with the national picture).

The election of a new branch chair and committee failed to materialize; no candidates came forward and so no posts were filled. This resulted in a call for an Extraordinary General Meeting to be called (date to be confirmed), giving a second chance for the positions to be filled. Failure to do so may, sadly, lead to the dissolution of the Nuneaton & Bedworth branch after just 13 years.

If any Nuneaton & Bedworth branch member is interested in standing for a committee position or would like more information on what is involved, they are asked to contact the branch at info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk.

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The Good Ship Holed Below The Waterline

It's something of an understatement to say that 2026 has not been a good year for 'punk' brewer BrewDog – or more realistically, 2026 was the year when the house of cards came crashing down. The business, reckoned at one stage to be worth around two billion pounds, has been sold for £33 million to Tilray, a US-based cannabis giant, 38 bars closed with immediate effect, and nearly 500 staff members made redundant overnight. BrewDog co-founder James Watt was reported to be 'heartbroken' by the situation, but his distress is presumably tempered by the £100 million that he and fellow co-founder Martin Dickie made when they flogged 22% of the business to American private equity group TSG in 2017.

Big losers of course are the 'Equity For Punks' investors, who had responded to BrewDog's calls over the years for crowdfunding to keep the company out of the hands of the 'fat cat bankers' that they claimed to despise. Punks will get nothing out of the deal stitched up with Tilray behind closed doors. This is due in part to the special class of shares bought by TSG back in 2017, which guaranteed an annual return of 18% (not a typo – 18%!) regardless of company performance.

Whether TSG actually got these returns, given the failing performance of BrewDog, is not clear, but it certainly meant that 'Punks' were at the back of the queue, and highly likely to receive nothing unless BrewDog's performance was off-the-dial stellar. Making the whole thing super-cynical was that despite the massive injection of cash that the TSG deal brought, BrewDog later pressed ahead with another round of 'Equity For Punks' crowdfunding. Does a two-billion-pound business really need crowdfunding? Particularly when this follows the co-founders trousering £100 million? You could argue that the punk investors should really have done their research before throwing their cash into the BrewDog black hole, but many had clearly been seduced by the anti-establishment, stick-it-to-the-bankers ethos that the company had built its reputation on.

The BrewDog story will hopefully quieten down from here on, but if you want to find out more about this and the other controversies that have dogged the company and James Watt in particular, then the excellent BBC Scotland podcast *Good Ship BrewDog* is still available. The six half-hour episodes take a forensic look at the disturbingly choppy waters beneath the ship. It's surprisingly entertaining and well worth a listen.



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Spotlight on ... The Horse & Jockey

The **Horse & Jockey** in Bentley may have been there for many years, but since Shelley and Steve took it over in May 2024, it has been rejuvenated as a country pub with both contemporary and traditional aspects. Consistently delivering high quality beer, food and a customer-focussed experience, has seen locals streaming in, placing the pub firmly back as the heart of the community.



Steve admits they had not anticipated the amount of sheer hard work that was needed to get the pub into shape. They have painted the exterior, changed the carpets and furnishings, yet in a way that retains the history and character of the pub to the enjoyment of locals and visitors alike. The bar area and small snug behind it still have their tiled floors, real fires, high-backed chairs, and dogs as welcome as customers.

Before moving into the pub trade, Shelley worked as a catering manager for over 20 years, and Steve in the construction and quarry trade. Shelley had a clear vision for the kitchen to be the heart of the pub, and Steve wanted to complement this by providing good beer behind the bar. Visit to find out how they've done!

The pub generally serves three cask ales, two of them regular. Beer choice is driven by customer preference, so *Bass* is a regular in a pub which has served this classic ale for as long as even the oldest regular can remember. There is a house beer *Horse & Jockey*, and the guest ranges wide and far: Oakham, Abbeydale and Fixed Wheel are typical offerings. Vegan and gluten free beers are targeted, meaning no one need miss enjoying a good real ale.

The 52-seater restaurant managed by Shelley offers classic British dishes, but with a French twist, prioritising fresh local produce. She says her aim is that the food tastes great and delivers a visual wow factor. This has seen them host their first wedding reception, and the restaurant regularly serves multiple sittings, especially on a Sunday, the busiest day of the week.

It's clear that this underperforming pub has been turned into a thriving hub, hosting regular groups including ladies walking netball, a bowls club, sponsoring a local girls football team and competing with their ladies darts team. Of their successes Shelley says "we are proudest that we have achieved our aim of putting the pub back at the heart of the community. Hearing the laughter of the locals and seeing their camaraderie makes the pub feel alive."



Moving into the summer, their focus is on developing the garden. An outside bar was built last year, but this generous space is to undergo renovations and landscaping to provide a covered lounge area with relaxed seating and outdoor lighting for summer evenings, plus a large sunken fire pit. A season of outdoor live music is also planned.

Having enjoyed visiting the pub, meeting Shelley and Steve, and seen the plans for the garden, I think that we are lucky to have this splendid community pub in our branch.

Donna Jones

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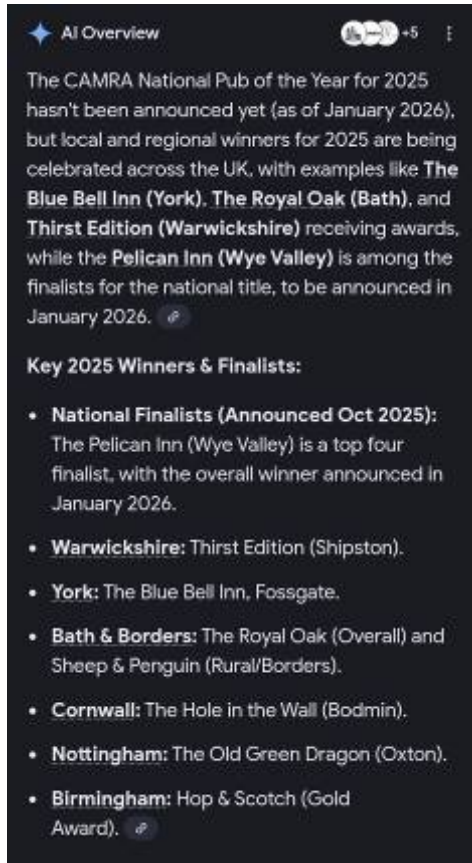
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Yet Another F-AI-lure ...

Whatever would we do without AI, artificial intelligence? Well, get some accurate information for a start! Lots of commentators have warned about its dangers, particularly its propensity for ‘hallucinating’ (otherwise known as ‘totally making things up’) but that doesn’t stop far too many people trusting it. A case in point was the sacking – ahem, ‘retirement’ – of the West Midlands police chief over the Aston Villa/Israeli football match fiasco, due in part to an AI fabrication. And as we pointed out last year, it bizarrely relocated Tamworth beer festival to random days in May, with no online trace that we could find of where it might have got this wacky idea from.

Our latest observation of Google AI Overview silliness came when we were searching the web for news of the CAMRA National Pub of the Year result. The overview ‘helped us out’ by (correctly) noting that the results hadn’t at that point been released, but then summarising a number of pubs – brilliant though they might be – which were pretty much out of the running. The only one of the final four which it got sort-of right was the **Pelican**, which it placed in Wye Valley; but of course it’s a Wye Valley-owned pub in Gloucester! It also championed the **Blue Bell Inn** at York, the **Royal Oak** in Bath, and the **Thirst Edition** ‘in’ Warwickshire (it’s of course at Shipston-on-Stour). Again, all marvellous pubs no doubt, but none of these three had even made it to the final sixteen. Google’s AI may have scraped the web and discovered that these pubs have won prizes, but it’s of little relevance to the particular query, if not downright misleading. Positively so in the case of Warwickshire, whose county winner – the **Market Tavern Tap** in Atherstone – didn’t even get a mention! Of the other ‘key’ pubs highlighted, just one, the **Hole in the Wall** at Bodmin, had even made it into the final sixteen. So really, this was just a list of pubs which have won awards of varying status at some point!

As the Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police force discovered to his career-ending peril, best to treat the results of AI with a great big pinch of sceptical salt!



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NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

The **Blue Boar** in Mancetter, run by the Sperrin family since 1997, was formally put up for sale in early March. The place is still trading normally at the time of writing, and the family, led by brothers Treeve and Warren, have pledged to sell the pub only to a “reputable buyer who will look after the pub and the people who work there.” The brothers say that it is time to start thinking about retirement, so it is not clear what the future holds for their other pub, the **Lord Nelson** not far away at Ansley. Anyway, we look forward to a positive outcome for the Blue Boar – and remember that it is currently business as usual, so please do support the place if you can. And if you have around £800,000 under the mattress and are interested, then the pub-trading arm of Christie & Co will be delighted to hear from you.

We hope it’s a formality, but by the end of March, English Heritage are due to decide on restoration plans for the top floor of the **Market Tavern Tap** in Atherstone. A staircase will be installed and the room sympathetically refurbished to provide a useful additional area. As well as an overspill, it will be used to host events such as functions, talks and film nights. We can only commend gaffers Leigh and Antony on their ongoing and sensitive restoration of the pub, which has massively reinvented the place.

Bejasus! Nuneaton’s former Blue Bear has been given a two-week Irish theme bar makeover to become the **Abbey Tavern**. Re-opening in mid March, the occasion was marked with a claimed 1,000 free pints of *Guinness*, who presumably supplied all the free stout and the pretty but rather lurid external paint job. To give credit though, they’ve retained the Church End ales (formerly offered by the Blue Bear) on the bar; let’s hope the craic-loving crowd drink enough to keep them on.

Carol Tatlow, of the much-loved Sticky Fingers cafe in Tamworth, has taken over the running of the **Samuel Barlow** in Alvecote. The pub re-opened under her reign as we went to press. She has lots of plans including introducing a new food menu. At least one cask ale will feature, kicking off with Wye Valley *Butty Bach*.

Two recent closures are believed to be due to management teams leaving: the **Green Man** at Middleton and the **Beehive** at Curdworth. Both are real ale pubs, and both were expected to re-open “soon”, so fingers crossed.

STAFFORDSHIRE

An intriguing development at the **Green Man** in Clifton Campville, where there is a planning application to open a micro brewery in a small purpose-built unit. The new building will be towards the rear, some distance from the pub. The application (with Lichfield District Council, under reference 26/00115/FUL if you want to take a nosy) is still under consideration. If approved, you can be sure we’ll be finding out what the bigger picture is!

The **Duke of York** in Lichfield re-opened in March after a wide-ranging refurbishment. Read more on page 18.

Work of a rather more urgent nature is going on at the **Horse & Jockey** in Lichfield as we put the magazine together. It was struck by a vehicle during opening hours, on the evening of 16th March, on a street where you wouldn’t really expect to see much traffic. The building was struck by the main front windows, seriously damaging the wall and window column, and impacting customers inside. Thankfully no one was seriously injured, but the building was

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Tipple Tattle cont.

damaged enough to require closure and the introduction of structural props. It is still closed at the time of writing, but we look forward to its re-opening.

We hear that **Pitchers** in Tamworth plan on introducing a cask ale to their offerings. If this leaves you asking, “Pitchers, where’s that?”, then it’s the former Garden Bar Terrace, formerly Korey’s, formerly Corey’s, formerly Casa Bar. Or if that’s little help, the place almost next door to the **Globe Inn**. We wait and see to find out what ale(s) Pitchers have in mind.

Too late for the last issue was the sad news that Mark Houston, ‘grumpy’ landlord and chef of the **White Lion** at Harlaston, died towards the end of January. The pub remains closed, and its future is uncertain at present.

Another closure, this time for economic reasons, is the **Horse & Jockey** at Freeford, which shut its doors towards the end of February. For lease signs are now in place.

WEST MIDLANDS

The **Cask & Craft** micropub on Boldmere Road in Boldmere appears to have ceased trading as of February, following a number of observations in January that the place was closed when it would normally have been open. The reasons for the apparent closure are not known. It opened in February of 2019.

There was also some uncertainty regarding the **Leviathan Brewing Tap** just outside Sutton town centre, with the place unexpectedly closed from early in the year. Luckily this is not expected to be permanent, with the closure apparently down to some medical issues.

BEYOND THE BORDERS

It’s somewhat shocking to be reminded that the **Cock Inn** at Sibson has been closed since November 2019. Externally, this once-pretty timber-framed pub is looking in a fairly dilapidated state, with heavy shoring now in place at one side of the building, presumably to prevent imminent collapse. And with it also being a thatched building, the interior state may well prove to be in a similarly shocking condition. There is now a petition in place at change.org, calling for the building to be restored – do look for it and add your name if you have not already done so. It’s not made clear, but presumably the petition is aimed at owners Star Pubs (part of Heineken UK). There are still Star signs outside, claiming that refurbishment is planned, but even these signs are now looking distinctly tatty! The pub group seems content to let this historic building just rot.

We noted in the last issue that the **Weighbridge Inn** at Burton closed in early January. We hear rumours that another Burton landlord may be taking the place on; rumours often turn out to be just so much hot air, but fingers crossed ...

• Thanks to contributors David D, Kevin G, George G, Louise G, David T, Martin M, Eric R, Adam R, John R

Farewell Joe

It is with great sadness that we pass on the news that former LST branch committee member Joe Rabbitt passed away recently after a long illness. Joe was a regular attendee at meetings and socials and served as branch secretary.

We send his family our deepest sympathy, and will raise a glass in his memory at the next branch meeting.

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North London Circular

A visit to London in February enabled me to do a loop of six pubs, starting and finishing in Kentish Town. All are listed in the 2026 CAMRA *Good Beer Guide*. First call was the **Duke Of St Albans**, pictured right, situated at the top end of Kentish Town, near to one of the entrances to Hampstead Heath. This is a smart corner pub with a large front bar, offering a wide range of drinks and specialising in whiskies. Of more interest to the beer drinker is the small back room with lots of mirrors from old breweries, many of which are long closed, and some all the better for being so! There was a decent choice of real ales, from which I chose *Black Beauty* from Vale of Buckinghamshire. This was a traditional London-style porter served in good condition.



Next up was the **Wrestlers**, left, in Highgate village, a short bus ride away. This was another pleasant pub, with an historic interior. However, the real ale offering was less interesting, with the four handpumps offering well-known brands. That said, the Harvey's *Sussex Best* from Lewes was on top form, at a good price for the area. The former London Brewing Company brew-pub, the **Bull**, is just up the road and is still trading as a real ale boozier.

Talking of the London Brewing Company, their premises are now located in Finchley, and that was my third stop. The **Bohemia** is situated on a busy high street, and the rather ordinary frontage gives little indication of what is to be found inside! I was impressed with this excellent pub and brewery, which offered five of their own beers on cask, with one of them being a collaboration with Elusive Brewing in Berkshire. There were also several quality real ciders being dispensed from another bank of handpumps. The on-site brewery is pictured right. I opted for the London Brewing Company *100 Oysters Stout*, and on ordering, the switched-on barman asked me if I had an allergy to oysters. I confessed that I had never actually ever eaten an oyster straight from the shell, though I had tried a few of them in stouts before! The beer was served in excellent condition, being full-bodied and big on flavour.



I had considered staying in the Bohemia, partly because of the excellent beer and surroundings, but mainly because of the monsoon conditions that were now battering Finchley. However, the **Elephant Inn** was my next planned stop and it was just a few minutes walk away. Pub traditionalists would like it for the unspoilt interior, pictured left, and good atmosphere, and Fullers should be given credit for not turning this into a nondescript roadhouse. Unfortunately, the Fullers *Grand Slam* from Chis-



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North London Circular cont.

wick was a rather ordinary session ale compared to the excellent beers sampled in the previous three establishments. Nevertheless, the roaring fire was most useful for drying out my dripping wet coat!

Having ticked off four pubs that were new to me, it was now time to return to two old favourites in Kentish Town. The **Southampton Arms** is a well-known, long-established free house, and as on previous visits was found to be very busy. From a wide selection of ales and ciders on the bar I went for Lakedown *Gateau* from East Sussex, another delicious dark beer which was very drinkable. The bar snacks were tempting, too, and it was difficult to leave this wonderful, traditional pub, but my final stop was beckoning.



The **Pineapple** has an equally good reputation and is well placed for the Underground station to get back to Euston. Such is its popularity the place was extremely busy, but the efficient young girl serving quickly took my order and poured an excellent Big Hug *Juicy Pale*, brewed at Portobello in West London. The staff here were doing a great job here under pressure, with more and more customers arriving and crowding the bar. This was not helped by a lone woman sat with her dog at a large table, seemingly oblivious as to how much room she was taking up! Nevertheless, this was a fitting end to a great day of pubs and beer in North London. Cheers!

Adrian Smith

Welcome Back To The Duke

On 9th March we joined fellow landlords, landladies and civic members at the long-anticipated re-opening of one of Lichfield's most beloved pubs. The **Duke of York** re-opened its doors for a preview-by-invite, hosted by long-term licensees Leanne and Andy, who proudly showcased the historic venue's extensive refurbishment, or 'sparkle' as it has been affectionately named.



Owners Joule's have breathed fresh life into this character filled pub, enhancing its charm and adding new exciting features like a games room, quirky nooks and new drinking areas. The space somehow feels bigger yet more cosy, striking a balance with the traditions of a 'proper pub' and new innovations such as the shuffleboard.



The atmosphere was wonderful. We enjoyed live music and sampled the in-house Scotch eggs and sausage rolls, which were excellent. On the bar, the Joule's *Shropshire Hop* ale was on top form. Big congratulations to all involved – the pub looks fantastic! Special thanks to Leanne, Andy and the hard-working team for a wonderful night.

Louise Greenaway



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Coming up ...

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- Sun 19th Apr Cheese Club
- Mon 20th Apr Quiz Night
- Thu 23rd Apr St. Georges Day
(Games Night and Chip Van)
- Fri 15th May Singer – Carl Jenkins
- Sun 17th May Cheese Club

Find more events on Facebook:
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- Bar
- Lounge
- Pool room
- Beer garden
- Open fire

Look Out For Burton Ale Trail In June

The semi-legendary Burton Ale Trail (aka BAT) is back in Burton upon Trent this June and this time it's kicking off in true World Cup style. With the tournament starting just days later, the town's biggest pub celebration is tapping straight into football fever.

With every Ale Trail having its own theme, organiser Ian Webster says this year's was an easy decision. "Our mascot is a bat called Marvin and he adopts a new persona for each trail. Last year he was Ozzy Osbourne; this summer it felt only right to recreate the famous 1966 World Cup image for the poster," Ian explains. "We'll have T-shirts on sale as always, but we've gone one better this time and there will be a second design available for anyone who might not fancy celebrating English football."

Launched in 2021, the Burton Ale Trail has quickly become a firm fixture in the town's social calendar. "The idea came about during the Covid pandemic, when the only way to get a proper pint was via off-sales or home delivery. The local CAMRA festival had been cancelled at the eleventh hour, so a beer festival spread across multiple venues seemed like the perfect solution. When the final whistle was blown on lockdown, the Burton Ale Trail was born. "It genuinely gave the town its first post-Covid party. The pubs were packed, and people were asking when the next one would be held before the first beer had even been sold."

Over the past five years, more than 20 venues have taken part, reflecting the ever-evolving real ale scene in Burton. The team selection for June is still under wraps. "It's too early to name the squad, we are waiting on a few last-minute fitness tests but we'll be playing to our strengths," Ian says. "Join the Facebook group to keep up to date."

2026 sees the BAT sponsored for the first time. "I am looking forward to working with Burton Bridge Brewery, who are our main sponsors, and Samuel Allsopp & Sons Ltd, who feature on the second t-shirt. Bass, Double Diamond, G3, Joule's and Real Ale Finder will all feature on the shirt and our digital platforms."

One of the trail's greatest strengths is Burton's geography; the town is tailor-made for a pub crawl, with most venues within easy walking distance. "If you start at the **Elms** in Stapenhill and finish at the **Oak & Ivy** near the Town Hall, it's around two miles and pretty flat. In some parts of the trail there are only a few steps between pubs. You can almost fall out of one and straight into the next."

Burton upon Trent built its global reputation on beer. While the brewing industry may not match its late 19th-century peak, the quality of its pubs remains second to none and the Burton Ale Trail showcases them at their very best. "I feel obliged to squeeze in a few more football clichés," laughs Ian, donning a sheepskin coat. "It'll be a game of two halves, but probably in the same glass. Lace up your drinking boots and get on the pitch! Buy a shirt (or two), work on your tactics, try to hit the bar as much as possible, and remember to keep your dribbling under control."

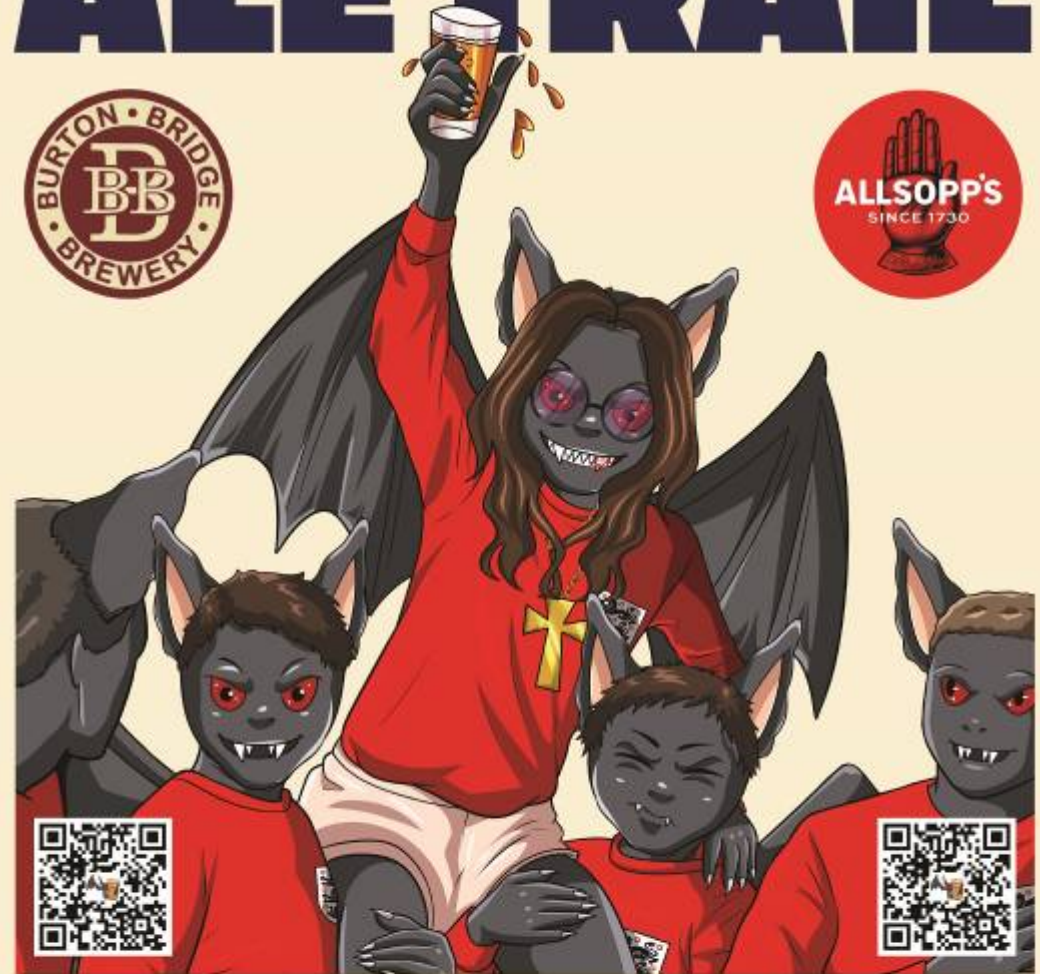
Next LST
Branch
Meetings

Tue 7th Apr, Boldmere Tap, Sutton
Tue 5th May, Tamworth Tap, Tamworth
Tue 2nd June, Duke of York, Lichfield
(all 7.30pm start)

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A Very British Love Letter To Pubs

When we heard about the film *Mother's Pride*, it went straight to the top of our 'must do' list. Undeterred by the slightly confusing and uninspiring name (it does actually have a significance – you'll find out what if you go see it!), we headed to Tamworth Odeon to combine two of our favourite things – cinema and of course, pubs! From the moment the opening scenes rolled, it was obvious that the film had been made by people who understand British pub culture. It stars familiar faces such as Martin Clunes, James Buckley and Mark Addy and follows the story of a fragmented family coming to terms with bereavement, while trying to save an ailing pub that was once the heart and soul of the community, now facing pub chain acquisition or closure.



In true British 'boy meets girl' film style, this slightly depressing story line takes an upwards turn and becomes an uplifting, feel-good film, though at the same time managing to convey the anxieties of rising costs, experimentation and judging.

There were laugh out loud moments, along with a few tear-inducing scenes. The story develops as the pub endeavours to fight for its survival by brewing a beer to compete in the Champion Beer of Britain competition. Footage from the actual Great British Beer Festival, held in Birmingham in August 2025, was used – see if you can spot yourself. We picked out a few familiar CAMRA faces in the crowd.

As film critics we may be amateurs, but as pub-regulars we know that the film got it right, albeit with a pint or two of poetic licence. The film manages to balance humour, suspense and a genuine affection for beer culture. It's not just a film about beer, it's a feel-good statement about community, tradition and the stubborn optimism that is keeping our pubs alive.

On our way home we both agreed that the film made you want to go straight to a proper boozier. Fortunately, in the LST branch that's never very difficult!

Louise Greenaway

LST Pubs of the Year 2026

We now have our branch Pubs of the Year! We widened out participation amongst branch members this year, inviting participation by those may not be active at meetings and so forth, but who might still want to get involved. Judging was done using the various CAMRA recommended criteria, and the results were:

- Staffordshire POTY:** Tamworth Tap, Tamworth
- Warwickshire POTY:** Market Tavern Tap, Atherstone
- West Midlands POTY:** Boldmere Tap, Boldmere
- Overall Cider POTY:** Tamworth Tap, Tamworth

Look out for the presentation dates, and read more in the next issue!

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Malaga – More Than Sun And Sangria?

Malaga – at the centre of Spain's Costa del Sol, and the birthplace of Picasso. But if pretending to like Picasso's stuff is a step too far, and lying aimlessly in the sun does your head in after ten minutes, is there enough on the beer scene to keep you happy?

Temporarily leaving aside a quest for Spanish beers, my first port of call was the **Cervecería Untertürkheim**, right, a place close to the beaches. It's a German food-themed place, and backs this up with an excellent menu of German beers (around 40), and an even better Belgian array (125, including some rarities – the bar would qualify for *Good Beer Guide Belgium!*). There was the added bonus of some festive leftovers, eight Belgian Christmas beers, all around the 10% mark. These provided nightcap beers over a number of visits! The place has a slightly unusual history: the owners opened a bar of exactly the same name in Buenos Aires in 2004, and then decided – as you do – to replicate it in Malaga. Well, if I ever make it to Buenos Aires, sounds like there's at least one decent bar to visit ...



The local beer prospects were decidedly better in **Birras Deluxe**, left, a nice looking place with a real beery vibe, though the staff did seem overly keen to decide exactly where you sat (the place was mildly busy to be fair). Half of sixteen taps were given over to Spanish draughts, while the fridges had a ridiculous range from all over, claimed to be around 400. The house beer, made by an unidentified Malaga brewery, was *IPA Deluxe*, an exemplary strong IPA – 6%, full bodied with loads of resinous and fragrant hoppiness. Thoughts turned then to the fridges, but this is where things got annoyingly complicated: the exotic list is only online (something we have to reluctantly accept these days, particularly for so many beers), and this online list has no prices! Unless you are willing to order blindly, or are prepared to waste both your and the barman's time on price queries, you'll probably do what I did and move on.

Luckily, there's an excellent option nearby, **Cervecería La Botica de la Cerveza**. This small bar had four Spanish micros on draught, including the rather gorgeous Sáez & Son *Tenebrae*, a 10% imperial stout. Here too they have an overwhelming range of bottles and cans, around 200, but they make ordering simple. There is a wall of beer, right – empty containers which you can pick up and study, plus the price is marked on the bottom. Simple! And there are a number of speciality beers where you really do need to check the price first! This was another place for multiple visits, with star of the bottled show being another dark beer, *Zeta Blackbell*, a beautiful coffee-laden porter from Valencia.



Close by is **Kiwi House of Beer**, probably the closest Malaga comes to a micropub: room for about 40 people, eight beers on draft, and some other drinks in the fridge. Unsurprisingly given the name, it's run by a couple of New Zealanders, with the house beers (under the

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Malaga cont.

Doskiwis name) also brewed by a New Zealander in Spain. I try three of the house beers, and they're all pretty good: two hazy pales which are surprisingly different in character, plus a pleasantly fruity sour with raspberry and blackberry.



La Fábrica is a Cruzcampo brewpub in the centre of town, which (with an anti-keg lager bias) I was fully expecting to hate. But it does produce some decent independent beers in the gleaming brewery (left) right next to the sprawling main room. Seven draught beers offered a good range including a wit and a honey beer, though nothing black. Particularly striking was the 6.7% *Coraje*, very reminiscent of a really good ESB: solid brown, with a roasty, toasty maltiness, and an assertive dry bitterness. The place gets rammed in the evenings; just as well as the brewery looks to have a large capacity.

Central Beers is worth a visit, with a draught list of 15, though only a handful of these are Spanish. One of these was fabulous, the Menno Olivier *Series 3 Hazelnut*, a 10.9% imperial stout absolutely shouting out with chocolate and hazelnuts. This is another place with a big range in the fridge, but there's not even a list, let alone prices!

For something a bit different, head to the **Recyclo Bike Café**, right. The bicycle theme includes three decent-looking bikes suspended from the ceiling – a bit of waste if that's where they stay – and the bar leads straight into a cycle repair shop. The latter didn't seem to be generating footfall – booze beats bikes here. As much café as bar, there's only dross on draught, but it does have a bottled range from the local 3Monos brewery. Once again, the black beer was outstanding: 3Monos *Stout* at 5.2% was a top-class example, superb chocolate flavours from the malts alone.



If you fancy exploiting the town's excellent bus system (€1.40 for any single journey) then the **Amsterdam Café** is a cosy 'brown bar' sort of place: old black-and-white pictures and low lighting. A novel Spanish beer in here was the Mica *Tora*, a barrel-aged beer which uses fino sherry casks. The novelty is that it's a 5.3% Pilsener-style beer, not a normal candidate for such treatment! That said, it works surprisingly well – it's suggestively like a fino, very dry but fruity with it.



El Rincón Del Cerveceros (Brewer's Corner), left, is sadly not on a street corner, but it is a splendid spot for beer. There are 10 interesting beers on draught, eight of which are Spanish, plus a wide range of bottles and cans. And it's the only beer place visited in town which does *tapas* in the traditional way – a little free snack to accompany your beer, inevitably on the salty side! I'm pleased to find a new beer in here, the special edition *Helles Märzen* from Bamberg's Aecht Schlenker. It's

a paler version of the standard *Märzen*, and unusually, is unfiltered. The smoked ham *tapas* is, accidentally, an excellent accompaniment to this smoked beer!



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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
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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
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Local Festival Diary

Festivals with a **bold heading** are CAMRA festivals, where entrance is free to CAMRA members. Why not join? See page 28 or go to camra.org.uk/join

1st-4th May, Hop Station Bank Holiday Beer Festival
198 Walsall Wood Road, Lazy Hill, Aldridge, WS9 8HB
17 real ales plus real ciders. Live music, street food. Normal opening hours.

5-6th June, Stratford-Upon-Avon Beer & Cider Festival
Stratford Racecourse, Luddington Road, CV37 9SE
40 ales, 20 ciders. Fri 12-10, Sat 11-10.

18-20th June, Leicester Beer Festival 2026
Abbey Pumping Station Museum, Corporation Road, LE4 5PX
50 ales, 12 ciders. Thu-Sat 12-10.

10th-12th September, 32nd Tamworth Beer Festival
Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Corporation Street, B79 7DN
75+ ales plus ciders and perries. Thu/Fri 11-11, Sat 11-10. Hot & cold food.

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



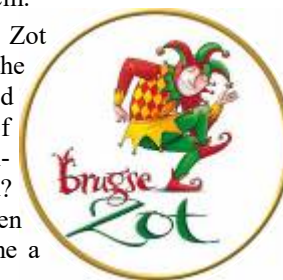
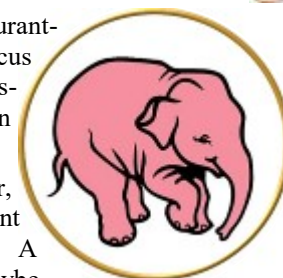
Pink Elephants

It was in the **Cambrinus** in Bruges. This ever-popular restaurant-cum-pub does the impressive balancing act of seeming to focus entirely on food, but also to offer a thick bible-like beer list of artisanal brews, some 400 in total. A bit of people-watching at the bar in here was both mildly amusing and mildly depressing.



It had never really occurred to me – or rather, it had never really sank in – how important marketing and imagery is for beers. A youngish couple – early twenties maybe – were making their choices almost solely based on the colourful imagery of the keg badges in front of them.

The guy was attracted to the Bruges Zot clown, but seemed more impressed by the pink elephant of Delirium. The girl also loved the Dumbo-ish elephant, but veered to the charismatic gnome of Chouffe. My initial thought was, bloody hell, this place has hundreds of far more interesting beers! What-Is-Wrong-With-You? But a bit of self awareness soon kicked in – wouldn't I have been exactly the same at their age? More than likely. Barman! Gimme a clown beer! Or maybe that one with the gnome





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