



# LAST ORDERS

**No 117 Jun/Jul 2026**

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

Contact us at

[LST.Camra@gmail.com](mailto:LST.Camra@gmail.com)

or see

[www.LST.Camra.org.uk](http://www.LST.Camra.org.uk)

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The free bi-monthly CAMRA newsletter for Lichfield, Atherstone, Sutton Coldfield & Tamworth now also serving the Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA region

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SUNDAY : 12-10



## 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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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



Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth CAMRA:  
www.LST.Camra.org.uk

Check out the website for pubs, maps, news & more!

Want to get in touch with the branch?  
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## Missing out?

Missing out on Last Orders? We distribute the magazine widely throughout the branch areas and beyond, 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

NuneatonCamra  
NuneatonBedworthCAMRA

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Charlotte Richards info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk

## Chair Chat

As we move through another busy period for pubs, clubs and breweries, it is encouraging to see the continued passion and commitment from our members, licensees and volunteers across the branch area.

I've recently enjoyed meeting up with branch and other regional branch members at the annual Mild in May jaunt around the Black Country, and bumped into a few that were at this year's members weekend. St Albans pubs were heaving with plenty of mini ale festivals and the whole weekend was well run and quite enjoyable. Chester hosts next year's event and I'd heartily recommend any member to literally make a weekend of it.

Our branch has enjoyed a packed calendar of socials and campaigning activity in recent months and it has been particularly pleasing to see strong attendance from both long-standing members and those discovering CAMRA for the first time. If you're interested in attending a meeting, the dates are listed in the magazine.

Of course, pubs still face continued challenges. Rising operating costs, staffing pressures and changing consumer habits continue to test the trade. That makes supporting your local more important than ever – every visit helps sustain these important community spaces.

I hope to see you around the pubs, clubs and events of the branch very soon.

George Greenaway, LST Chairman



## Better PUBLIC Transport

Why not join us on **Sunday 21st June** when we'll be running an event to take part in the national Campaign for Better Transport week?

It will take the form of a straightforward amble around some of Birmingham's pubs – or at least those which are conveniently close to the ever-expanding tram network! An off-peak all-day tram travel pass within zone 1 is £3.50, which can be bought onboard (contactless or exact cash). Meet up at **noon** at Grand Central tram stop (or what used to be called New Street before Birmingham mistook itself for New York) or at a pub of your choice along the way. The sequence we'll be doing is:

**Prince of Wales**  
**Colmore Tap**  
**Good Intent**  
**Woodman**  
**Wellington**

For a map, see the Branch Events page of the website at:  
[www.LST.Camra.org.uk](http://www.LST.Camra.org.uk)

We'll spend about an hour in each pub, so finishing about 6pm. See you there!



Find out about other events during the week at:  
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## Members Weekend

The annual CAMRA members weekend is held mid-April every year in a different town or city around the country. The weekend itself is free for members who then need to pay for accommodation, food, and of course beer! This year the destination was St Albans.

So what happens? The weekend is a mix of a formal Annual General Meeting of the campaign, motions for debate on various issues, and addresses from the chair, chief executive and sometimes a visiting speaker. Other workshops, discussions and information sessions also take place and these vary from year to year. Importantly there is also a members bar and information about local pubs that have cask ale.

Of course beer and socialising form a major part of everyone's weekend and it's a great opportunity to meet up with friends old and new and catch up over a pint or three ...

The AGM may not sound very exciting but it's a legal requirement and therefore an important element of the weekend. It usually only lasts about an hour and includes such things as receiving the accounts, votes on amendments to the Articles and voting for members of the National Executive (NE).

The rest of the members weekend includes various motions for debate and voting on them, plus presentations and awards. Motions for debate may come from the NE, from individuals or from branches around the country. They will cover a range of issues around the rules of CAMRA, the campaigns and policies. Again this may sound a little dull but actually is often very interesting and sometimes quite lively with different views being expressed and debated, often quite robustly. As a members organisation it's an opportunity to take part in setting the direction and aims of CAMRA.

This year there were seven motions. Among these were a request for the return of a printed version of BEER magazine, the provision of Welsh language promotional material, and a call for proposals to restore the Great British Beer Festival.

There was a presentation on the new strategy, digital and *Good Beer Guide* drop-in sessions, magazine, campaigner and website of the year awards and a presentation on proposed changes to beer scoring.

St Albans was a great place to hold the members weekend and this year there was a smaller than normal members bar but many local pubs took part in the weekend by having their own small beer festivals and events welcoming CAMRA members to the town. It felt like the whole town was part of the members weekend and everywhere you went you bumped into people that you knew. It helped that the weather was beautiful and sunny and on the Saturday there was a large market with many food stands in the centre of the town. Many people took the opportunity to extend their stay before or after the weekend to explore the beautiful, historic city of St Albans, particularly the numerous Roman remains, the interesting cathedral and museums.

So if you are a CAMRA member looking for a fun weekend with other like-minded members where you can take part in shaping the direction, aims, and policies of CAMRA and also enjoy plenty of good ale and explore towns and cities around the country, then I highly recommend attending the annual members weekend.

Next year the members weekend will be in Chester from 16th to 18th of April.

Sarah Brindley

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# FEAST WITH HEROES



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### Branch enters the 'Last Chance Saloon'

Following a disastrous AGM in March where they struggled to reach the quorum of seven members in attendance, Nuneaton & Bedworth CAMRA are facing the dissolution of the branch. There will be one further attempt to reach out to the branch membership at an EGM (date to be agreed) where volunteers can step forward to form a committee and rescue the branch.

Failure to do so will trigger the mechanism that will bring an end to the existence of the 14-year-old Nuneaton & Bedworth branch of CAMRA.

Any interested parties who have an interest in revitalising the branch are advised to contact [info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk](mailto:info@nuneaton.camra.org.uk) as soon as possible.

# THE MARE POOL



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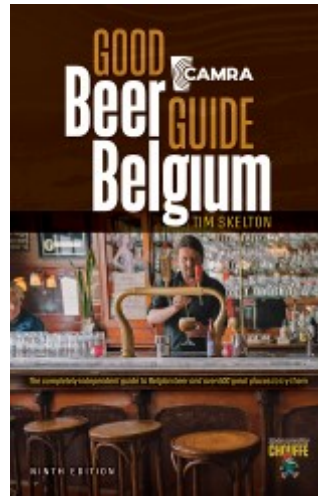
## Raise A Beer, Get A Copy, It's Back!

A collective sigh of relief is surely being heaved by Belgian beer lovers across the land – *Good Beer Guide Belgium* is back! With main man Tim Webb announcing his semi-retirement in the last edition, there were worries – would it quietly disappear? But here we are with the ninth edition of this splendid guide, albeit after an eight-year wait. And the good news is that the guide is now in the hands of another pro, Tim Skelton, a Brit-abroad-in-Benelux who also brought us *Beer In The Netherlands*, another guide which was well-thumbed by keen beer tourists.

The eighth edition of the *Guide* was certainly starting to show its age, particularly with Covid and other economic shocks meaning that a good fraction of the listed bars had closed. So what does the new edition bring? It's a slightly slimmer book, listing around 600 recommended bars, but the geographical coverage is still impressively wide, with big cities, small towns and sleepy villages across the whole of Belgium. Belgiophiles will spot many new venues among the selections, reflecting the new wave of Belgian cafes and bars, but obviously there is still a plethora of gorgeous, classic bars still making the cut.

As well as bars, the *Guide* still devotes a good chunk of its pages to the breweries of this beer-blessed nation. Breweries are star-rated according to their excellence, and their regular beers also described and star-rated. Here the *Guide* team run into a self-acknowledged problem: while the eighth edition saw the number of breweries rise from 160 to 245, this time it has ballooned to around 400, including many tiny ('nano', 'pico') outfits. This makes it virtually impossible to do justice to them all, but amazingly enough, team *Guide* still manage to do proper listings for nearly 300. Now that's what I call research!

Quite apart from its superbly witty style of writing, the *Guide* includes travel notes (including rail stations and bus routes for bars), an extensive section on Belgian beer styles, and even a food guide for this land of culinary oddities. Whether you're an armchair drinker, first-time visitor, or old Belgian hand, this is a must-have book.



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## NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

We've never had a woof ale at the **Dog Inn** at Nether Whitacre, but we've now seen evidence to the contrary, right. The consumers of this can't even string two words together to describe it, but apparently it's totally tasteless. Two-legged customers however are lapping up the offerings on the bar; during the sunny days of spring these included a supremely quaffable 3.4% from Tiny Rebel, *Pit Stop*, and at the other end of the ABV spectrum, Exmoor *Beast* at 6.6%. Check out the serene beer garden when you visit – though there might be some woof specimens there. We can also recommend the local eggs and butter sold through the pub, though note that cash is required for these.



We don't often see St Peter's beers on draught in the branch area, so it's been pleasing to see a run of them at the **Angel** in Atherstone, with the excellent *Plum Porter* featuring a number of times, plus the rather luscious 6.5% *Cream Stout*.

Across the square, early August will see the **Market Tavern Tap** hosting an Ale, Sausage and Cider festival. See the inside-back-page festival listings.

Refurbishment work continues at the **Horse & Jockey** at Bentley, where the sizeable beer garden now includes a large wooden covered seating area – which should ensure that the place can cope with whatever the great British summer throws at us!

## STAFFORDSHIRE

We are happy to note that the **Horse & Jockey** in Lichfield re-opened at the beginning of April, after two weeks of closure caused by the damage done when it was struck by an electric car. Structural damage was caused, so it must be a relief to the team – and customers! – that the pub has been put back into service so relatively quickly. Work remained in the damaged window area, but this is just a small part of the pub.

We do have other pub names in the branch area, but news from a third **Horse & Jockey**, at Freeford! Sadly, the previous tenants had to walk away in late March, but we are pleased to note that new management will be re-opening on the 25th of May, after we go to press. Pop in and see what's what!

The **Holly Bush** at Little Hay re-opened in mid April after a refurbishment running into six figures. Work has been done both inside and outside. Up to four cask ales on the bar, all from the Greene King portfolio.

A shudder went through the Tamworth real ale community in late March, when the Real Ale Finder app showed that the **Sir Robert Peel** was offering *Wainwright Gold Fresh Ale*. This is Carlsberg Britvic's attempt to foist keg-on-a-handpump to less savvy pubgoers. Could the Peel, Tamworth's longest standing real ale champion, and winner of one of CAMRA's 50-year golden awards, really be getting involved in this big-brewer con trick? We never really doubted the Peel's real ale street cred, and a rapid visit confirmed it was cask *Wainwright Gold*, the Real Ale Finder listing just a bit of finger trouble. Does make you wonder though, why Real Ale Finder even allows this keg



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## Tipple Tattle cont.

carbuncle to be selectable as a cask ale?

It's some way off yet, but the **Turnpike** on the outskirts of Lichfield is expected to undergo a major £350,000 refurbishment, involving three weeks of work. The plan is to close in November, so as to be able to reopen at the beginning of December. The pub offers up to six real ales, with two usually from Titanic.

The **Moat House** in Tamworth has started offering *Enville Ale* as one of its potentially regular beers. The first cask sold out on a single Friday session, leaving Saturday honey-beer free, so the signs are good! This replaces *Oakham Citra*, a sensible move as two of the other regular beers – *St Austell Proper Job* and *Church End Goat's Milk* – are also on the hop-heavy side. When you visit, take a look at the impressive table-top model of the building pictured right. This is the work of prolific local modeller David Farnworth. The detail is quite striking.



Positive news from Fradley, where a planning application has been made to convert a former Indian restaurant into a micropub. The planning documents suggest a name of *Brewhouse Fradley*, with a definite micropub slant: 40-50 people capacity, no music, simple snacks. Let's hope for speedy progress!

Whitbread – once famous for its 'tour of destruction' of brewery takeovers and closures – is doing a bit more slash-and-burn now that it is the owner of Premier Inns. All of its Beefeater and Brewers Fayre pub-cum-restaurants (generally part of a Premier Inn) are to be closed and mostly converted into hotel rooms. Within the branch area this just affects the **Ladybridge** at Tamworth, but around 200 across the nation face a similar fate.

### BEYOND THE BORDERS

July brings with it the annual Market Bosworth Rail Ale Festival (see inside back page fest listings), organised by Hinckley & Bosworth CAMRA, but we note that the H&B team are pushing the boat out by supporting the return of a Hinckley festival. This will take in place in late September, in conjunction with Hinckley Rugby Football Club, and will likely involve something like 40 real ales and up to 30 ciders. There will be free transport options from both Hinckley and Bosworth.

We noted in the last issue that there were hopes of a re-opening of the former Weighbridge Inn in Burton, and happily this came to pass towards the end of March. In its new life it is the **Coppersmiths Inn**. *Bass* will be a semi-regular, joined by three guest ales. It's little changed, cosy as ever.

Well done to Derby CAMRA branch for liaising with their local MPs and being the catalyst for the planned parliamentary debate secured by Baggy Shanker, MP for Derby South. The debate will focus on cask beer, its protection and promotion. It is expected that 'fresh ale' – AKA keg beer served through handpulls – will be among the issues considered, as well as getting UNESCO 'intangible cultural heritage' status for cask ale.

# TAMWORTH TAP

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*Celebrating our ...*  
**Pub of the Year Winners**  
*Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth CAMRA*

Well another year has flown past, and here we are again with CAMRA's Pub of the Year process kicking off for another year, when the 220-odd branches around the country start the process by choosing their branch winners. Truth be told, this had to be done in March, but we couldn't get the presentations for our winners done in time for the previous issue of the magazine!

With the branch having territory in three counties, we had to choose POTY winners for each of them – Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands – and separately, an overall Cider POTY for the branch. This year we decided to shake things up a bit. We have a large core group of active branch members who basically run the branch (the beer festival, social trips, magazine and so on) – an 'inner circle' so to speak, though any branch member is free to join and contribute. In previous years, it is this inner circle which has selected the POTYs, but this year we decided to widen out participation by inviting all branch members to take part (or at least those with branch email communications enabled).

We had a good response for this, and we thank our new contributors for their efforts. That said, it wasn't simply a case of contributors just nominating their favourite pub. We asked them to visit a shortlist for the county or counties that they were interested in doing, and score each pub against the varied criteria that CAMRA use. Beer quality is only one criterion, with seven others such as service, community etc.

Anyway, after doing the number-crunching for this wider and more objective approach, the POTY results are – the same as last year! We did at least have a different overall Cider POTY, so it wasn't totally Groundhog Day ...



For Staffordshire, and also winning the overall Cider POTY, we have:

**Staffordshire  
 Tamworth Tap**

Gaffers George and Louise are pictured with just a few members of Team Tap. Our congratulations go to them all, and best of luck for the next levels of the respective competitions!



*Celebrating our ...*  
**Pub of the Year Winners**  
*Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth CAMRA*

Meanwhile, our Warwickshire POTY for the second year running is Atherstone's **Market Tavern Tap** – quite something for a pub which only re-opened in its new guise in September 2024 – more so as it even went on to win overall Warwickshire POTY last year! Can it do the double this year? We'll know for the next issue so watch this space.

Pubs officer John is pictured presenting the branch award to gaffers Antoni and Leigh. Their pub is truly splendid, an ongoing labour of love, with the next stage of classy refurbishment involving opening up the second floor. If you've yet to visit – what are you waiting for?



**Warwickshire  
 Market  
 Tavern  
 Tap**

Over now to the West Midlands and Boldmere, where we complete our prize-winning trilogy of Taps, with the **Boldmere Tap** taking the award, also for the second year running. CAMRA National chairman Ash Corbett-Collins is pictured with long-standing gaffer Dave and LST branch chairman George.

**West Midlands  
 Boldmere Tap**

Dave and partner Lorraine have been at the helm since 2014, when Joule's re-opened this splendidly refurbished community pub, decorated to the usual high standard. Is a long-service award coming up too?



## Derbyshire Day Out

On a sunny Saturday in May it seemed appropriate to spend a few hours in scenic Derbyshire, visiting some beery places that were new to me. The essential travel pass is the useful Derbyshire Wayfarer ticket, valid on most public transport within the county.

The first stop of the day was the **Bentley Brook Tap**, right, a twenty-five-minute walk or short bus ride from Matlock town centre. Set in the countryside, this delightful taproom had been converted from a mill. It's about half a mile from the Bentley Brook Brewing Co, located on a farm. The downstairs bar of the tap is complemented by a smart, spotless upstairs room, where I sampled a Bentley Brook *Harlequin Smash*. This single hopped pale ale was a good start to the day. A second cask beer and several keg lines were also available. The only downside was the now common and annoying occurrence of dogs barking at each other in the bar, which spoils the atmosphere for customers who would prefer a more relaxed environment. I was pleased that I had chosen to sit upstairs out of the way. Amusingly enough, the website suggests pooch owners "bring down your *fury* friends for a pint or two". Various people clearly had!




Next up was the recently opened **Pentrich Brewery Taproom** in Ripley, left, situated in a trading estate on the northern edge of town. The large bar was similar to many other modern taprooms, being housed within the brewery, in an industrial unit. There were plenty of long benches and tables inside and out, and screens and menus listing all the beers and ciders currently on tap. From the four cask offerings I chose Pentrich's *In Your Palace* and *Future Folklore*. Both

were hazy session pale ales brewed with Citra hops, the latter being my beer of the day. Pizzas were available too, though I doubt they were hoppy and hazy!

Conveniently there was a direct bus to the next venue, the **Groovers Arms**, right. This is on the other side of Ripley, in a residential location. This newly built bar is on the site of a former pub which had been demolished. There was an impressive range of beers available, both on cask and keg, and there were a fair number of drinkers. I chose the cask Little Critters *Idaho 7* from Sheffield, which was a pale ale that went down effortlessly!




Heading south, the next call was the **Tiny Tap**, home of the Little Brewing Company, based on another trading estate, this one at the north end of Derby. There were some outside tables as well as the taproom, although the place seemed rather quiet for a Saturday afternoon. From the handpumps I chose the Little *Wolf*, a gluten-free pale ale, which I supped in the shadow of the brewing vessels, left.



# THE SIR ROBERT PEEL

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## Derbyshire Day Out cont.

Just outside Derby city centre is the newly opened **Victoria & Albert Vaults**, pictured right, a street-corner pub recently converted from a hairdressers. Named after nearby boozers that are no longer trading, it had the feel of a small, traditional tavern that could have been there for decades. The locally-brewed Dancing Duck *Duck Norris* was a 4.6% pale ale, served in excellent condition, and it was good to see a new pub full of customers.



I had intended to have a beer at the **Hairy Dog**, situated in the heart of the city, but on entering I noticed that customers were drinking out of the dreaded plastic 'glasses'. I was informed by the girl serving that this would be the case for the rest of the evening, so as I personally cannot stand drinking beer in this way, I left disappointed. This was a shame as there were some decent real ales on the pumps. I'm assuming the plastic policy must have been a condition of their licence, as there was a gig due to start, but beer and beakers don't mix in my opinion!



Having visited five venues that were new to me, I headed back to the station via the familiar and long-established **Brunswick Inn**. A wide range of Brunswick Brewing beers were available, and most of the guest beers were on the strong side. The Ossett/Amity *Thunder Rat*, a Victorian mild at 5.5%, was no exception. I am often wary of collaborations, my thinking being too many cooks can spoil the broth, but this brew was delicious! In any case, I don't recall having a bad Ossett beer, ever. That was a fitting end to an excellent day of drinking quality beer in Derbyshire.

Adrian Smith

Next LST  
Branch  
Meetings

**Tue 2nd June, 7.30pm, Duke of York, Lichfield**

**Mon 6th July, 7.30pm, Bird In Hand, Austrey**

**Mon 3rd August, 7.30pm, Samuel Barlow, Alvecote**

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Market Tavern Tap, Atherstone

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bod Lichfield, Streethay  
Bole Bridge, Tamworth  
Brew City Lichfield, Lichfield  
Brewhouse & Kitchen, Lichfield

Hop House, Tamworth  
King's Ditch, Tamworth  
Old Bank House, Tamworth  
Sir Robert Peel, Tamworth  
Tamworth Tap, Tamworth  
Three Tuns, Fazeley  
Whippet Inn, Lichfield  
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## Mild In May

To celebrate 50 years of the Wolverhampton and Dudley branches of CAMRA, the region arranged a social during Mild in May on the famous number 1 bus route for a leisurely crawl through the Black Country's rich pub heritage. With mild very much at the heart of the celebration, the trip offered the perfect opportunity to champion one of the region's most traditional beer styles while visiting some classic pubs between Wolverhampton and Dudley.

LST branch were well-represented and I enjoyed the company of Dave, John, Ian and Sarah, all keen to support both the anniversary celebrations and the continuing revival of mild ale. The number 1 bus route has long been regarded as one of the great pub transport links in the Midlands, threading together communities with deep brewing and pub-going traditions.

Our haul of pubs visited was long; in Sedgley we sampled at the **Bulls Head, White Lion, Beacon, Clifton, Swan Inn** and **Sanzibar**. At Upper Gornal it was the **Jolly Crispin, Briannia** and **Stripey Oss**, while back in Dudley the **Malt Shovel, Court House** and **Lamp Tavern**.

The day became a great opportunity to catch up with members from neighbouring CAMRA branches joining us at various stops along the route. As always with CAMRA events, there was a strong sense of camaraderie, shared memories and plenty of laughter.

Mild in May once again proved why the style remains so beloved across the Black Country. From dark, malt-driven milds with notes of chocolate and coffee to lighter ruby examples with gentle hop character, the beers sampled throughout the day demonstrated the variety and drinkability of a style often unfairly overlooked. Many pubs proudly showcased local breweries keeping the tradition alive, serving mild exactly as it should be – fresh, flavoursome and suitably sessionable.

Travelling by bus added to the charm of the occasion, we hopped on and off the frequent service grabbing a bite between stops, along with the odd cob and pork pie in the boozers. The number 1 route itself almost became part of the celebration, views out of the window of the ever-changing landscape of the Black Country and a rolling connection between generations of drinkers, pubs and brewing history.

Fifty years on from the formation of the Wolverhampton and Dudley CAMRA branches, the event served as a reminder that the organisation's greatest strength has always been its people. Whether long-standing campaigners or newer members discovering traditional ale culture for the first time, the shared passion for pubs, beer and community remains as strong as ever.

Once we'd established that we had stayed in the Black Country longer than public transport allowed, we took advantage of the Uber network to detour our way home via the **Metro Bar** in Bilston and the **Three Crowns** at Willenhall. As the final pints of mild were quaffed there was a feeling that the spirit of CAMRA's founding years still survives proudly in our pubs – best enjoyed with good company, a bus ticket in your pocket and an Uber app on your phone.

George Greenaway



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## Cryo Hops - What Are They?

Of late, some brewers are making an issue of using 'cryo hops' in their beers. But what are they? The hop equivalent of frozen peas? There's more to it than that ...

On a brewery tour, your guide will usually encourage you to take a green hop cone in your hand; not so that you can admire its beauty and gentle aroma, but so that you can tear it apart. Nestling under the greenery and close to the stem of the cone is the lupulin, the yellowish, pollen-like substance which is the hidden secret of the hop: the resins and oils carrying the complex and multi-faceted flavour components that brewers are after. Rub and sniff it and it all becomes clear – plus you'll need to wash your hands a number of times to get rid of the stubbornly sticky yellow-green residue that coats your fingers!

Extracting the lovely flavours (and preservative properties) of the lupulin is a major part of the brewer's art. Many brewers still swear by using the whole hop cone, adding them to the boil part of the brew at suitable points – early on for a longer boil to extract the more bitter, astringent flavours, later on to retain more delicate aromas.

Other brewers, particularly larger ones, use hop pellets. They are essentially ground-up and compressed hops, but during manufacture there is the option to remove some of the greenery, allowing a better concentration of the all-important lupulin. Based on the hops used, you will occasionally see T-90 or T-45 designations on beers, with T-90 implying no concentration (i.e. the pellets are around 90% leafy matter like a whole hop), while T-45 implies roughly a doubling of the lupulin content (i.e. the 'useless' leafy matter is about half of what it would typically be).

T-45 is essentially an example of a cryo hop – or a "lupulin enriched product" to use the industry jargon. The manufacturing process has to separate out the lupulin from the leafy matter, and this is done by reducing the hops to around -30°C. At these temperatures the lupulin particles become very hard and sand-like, and can essentially be sifted out of the frozen hops. The resulting lupulin powder can then be pelletised, with a certain amount of the leafy matter being reintroduced to give the pellet some structure.

Sounds like a lot of faff, but it does allow the brewer to more easily create beers with lots of hop character. This doesn't necessarily mean a lot of bitterness – that may not be pleasant, and in any case the human palate becomes saturated as bitterness increases; beyond about 100 IBU (international bittering units) you won't spot increases. Instead, think in terms of increased aroma and general flavour, such as that of a New England IPA: low in bitterness but with lots of fruity flavour. These effects can still be achieved with whole hops, but it generally means using lots of hops late in the process, with dry-hopping being the ultimate extreme: hops added once the formal brew is complete. Such late hopping brings with it correspondingly low rates of extraction of the underlying flavours. A bit like making a cup of tea with lukewarm water!

Fans of cryo hops also point to the better liquid yields when using them. While whole hop cones are splendidly traditional, they are also mini sponges, and will hold on to a certain amount of the finished brew. For middle-of-the-road beers this will not be a major issue, but for beers aiming at a very prominent hop character (i.e. expensive in terms of hops), small increases in yield can make all the difference.



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## Italian Tomato Ale

Should you find yourself in Milan with some time to spare, then highly recommended is a side trip to the characterful little town of Monza. It's only a ten-minute train ride – shorter than a typical metro ride within Milan itself – with several trains an hour. Unless you're a petrolhead, there's little point in visiting the famous racetrack. Instead, your mission here – maybe after a little stroll around this historic town – is to visit the **Carrobiolo** brewpub, just a few minutes from the rail station. It's in the rather anonymous building pictured right, identifiable only by the sandwich board which appears when the place is open.

What's the big deal? Well, among the dozen keg taps and two handpulls, you will discover some really special brews. This is a brewer who really knows his stuff and is not afraid to push boundaries!

This is exemplified by the beer that you really need to try first. *ITA* (pronounced ee-ta) is a 5% golden brew which doesn't have the slightest hint of red. Which is quite amazing as this tomato-basil-oregano brew – *Italian Tomato Ale* – is a masterpiece of beer-weird. It's rammed with tomato flavour and carries a lovely aroma – like a really fresh, really ripe up-market tomato. This is beautifully complemented by herbal fragrance, and yet it still tastes like beer, a hell of a balancing act! I'm lucky enough to later chat with the owner-brewer, and among other things, he explains that around a quarter of the fermentable material in the *ITA* comes from Datterini tomato juice – explains a lot ...

Lest the weirdness scare you off, there are plenty of conventional beer styles. The *Keller*, 4.5%, is a splendid recreation of the sort of rustic, low-carbonation lagers that you might find in a remote Bavarian village. There's also a 6.3% *Bock* which would easily pass muster in a Munich beer hall.

You won't be disappointed if your taste is more along the hoppy axis; there were three trans-atlantic-slanted beers during my visit, though the *AmanIPA* double IPA had just sold out. The 4.8% *American Pale Ale* was rather more hoppy than normal for the style but no less welcome for that. Tongue-coating and assertive, it overlaid a slight toffeeishness.

Moving up the scale, *Porcini Imperial Stout* at 9.7% was beautiful, supposedly a mushroom-dosed beer, but it came across as more like a boozy tiramisu, any mushroomy-ness blown away by the alcohol! *Coffee Brett*, 10.7%, was equally lush: winery and rich, it was brimming with coffee and chocolate. This was supposedly 'brettized', though any hint of *Brettanomyces* was again just lost against the boozy richness.

The two handpulls, left, were both in action. The *Sanpa Stout* was a simple, straightforward stout, a good palate reset to prepare for its mighty companion, the *O.G. 1111 2023*. This beer is simply stunning, appropriate as it's also 13%. It's a peated-malt stout which overflows with delicious complexity, packed with smoky flavour and highly reminiscent of an Islay whisky. Being near to perfection, if this beer doesn't put a smile on your face then there's really no hope for you ...



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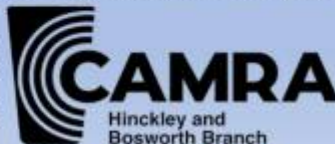
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## Local Festival Diary

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](http://camra.org.uk/join)

4-7th June, **Burton Ale Trail**

Held over a number of pubs in Burton upon Trent.

More info on Facebook, search for Burton Ale Trail.

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.

26-28th June, **13th Rutland Beer Festival**

County Museum, Catmos Street, Oakham, LE15 6HW

40+ cask/keg beers, 10 ciders. Fri & Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6.

24-26th July, **15th Market Bosworth Rail Ale Fest**

The Goods Shed, Station Road, CV13 0PF

60+ ales, 20 ciders/perries. Fri & Sat 11-10.30, Sun 11-4.

6-9th August, **Market Tavern Ale, Sausage & Cider Fest**

Market Tavern Tap, 21 Market Street, Atherstone, CV9 1ET

20+ ales plus a wide range of sausages and ciders.

25-29th August, **47th Peterborough Beer Festival**

The Embankment, PE1 1EF. Tue 5.30-11, Wed-Sat 12-11.

Hundreds of real ales plus ciders, spirits, wines, bottled bar, food, live music.

4-5th September, **33rd Harbury Beer Festival**

Harbury Village Hall, South Parade, CV33 9JE

Ales from Warwickshire & Leicestershire plus a selection of ciders/perries. Fri & Sat 11-11.

10-12th 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.

25-26th September, **Hinckley Beer Festival**

Hinckley Rugby Club, Leicester Rd, LE10 3DR

Around 70 ales & ciders. Fri & Sat 12-10.30

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Next edition: 1st August 2026.

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