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Hertfordshire

# *Pints of View*



Winter Edition 2025

North Hertfordshire Version

Issue No. 315

# THE GOOD BEER GUIDE 2026

The UK's  
best-selling  
beer and  
pub guide

See page 27



**Guest columnists**  
Annabel Smith, John Porter, Les Middlewood,  
Lotte Peplow, Paul Clinton, Pete Brown,  
Roger Protz, Steve Bury, Tim Webb



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**EDITOR**

**Paul Donatantonio**  
editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk

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advertising@pintsofview.camra.org.uk

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# CONTENTS



**7 Campaign Column**  
Nationalcampaigning in your local magazine.

**8 World-Wise Webb**  
Tim Webbexplains why big breweries do not work. Pt 5.

**10 Readers Write**  
 Have your say! Email [editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk)

**15 Beating Herts**  
LesMiddlewood describes the boundary between South Herts and HEB branches.

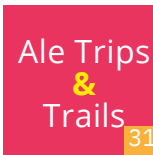
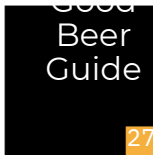
**16 Brewer's View**  
Paul Clinton, founder of Six Hills Brewing, says real ale can come in a keg!

**18 Beer Belle**  
Annabel Smith talks about beer being good for you... and for politicians  
**For Pete's Sake**

**20**  
PeteBrowncompares Norwich with St Albans.

**22 Hoppy Lotte**  
LottePeplow reports from the GABF, whilst shedding a tear for GBBF.

**24 Cheery Porter**  
John Porter is yet another voice calling out "Hear, hear" to more guest beer!



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# CONTENTS (cont)

- 27 GoodBeerGuide**  
We congratulate some of the Hertfordshire pubs that made it in.
- 28 Herts CAMRA Awards**  
A serial GBG entrant presented with a special certificate.
- 31 Ale Trips & Trails**  
Orpubcrawls, as we used to call them.
- 34 Historic Hertfordshire**  
The inns & alehouses of Victorian St Albans.
- 35 Competition**  
You'll need to read page 34 if you want a chance to win.
- 36 Regional CAMRA Festivals**  
In Hertfordshire and beyond.
- 39 Herts Pub, Club, Church & Brewery Festivals**  
Could be what's happening, or what happened.
- 40 Herts Pub, Club & Brewery News**  
Stories from some of the county's near 800 pubs, clubs and breweries.
- 43 Wether Report**  
JDW HQ answers the questions most people don't ask.
- 44 Herts Brewery A - Z**  
Snippets about most of our 15 breweries.
- 46 Down Your Way**  
Hertfordshire pubs and clubs - what's changed.
- 53 South Herts Pub of the Year 2026**  
The shortlist. And how to do the judging.
- 54 Herts CAMRA Meetings, Socials & Festivals**
- 57 Herts CAMRA Contacts**
- 58 Steve's SHOUT**  
Steve Bury shouts about short measures.
- 60 Roger... and out**  
Roger Protz provides a glimpse of what's in his latest book - Ale City.
- 62 Advertising & Contributors**





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# Campaign Column CAMRA

## A place in our *Herts* – pub campaign

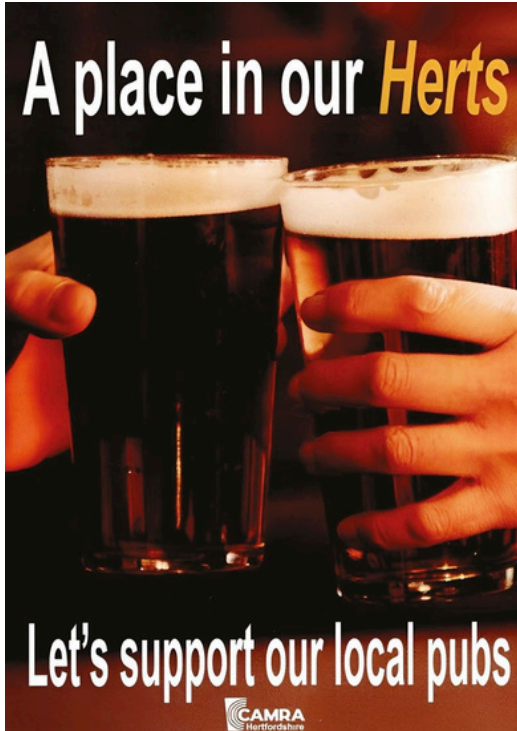
The Hertfordshire CAMRA branches have launched a campaign urging people to regularly visit the county's pubs.

The initiative is being promoted through posters in pub windows, at local tourist offices, at Hertfordshire CAMRA beer festivals, and via social media.

Well-publicised national economic pressures have negatively affected pubs across the country, resulting in many closing for extended periods, or, worse still, pulling down the shutters for good.

As the financial noose tightens, so the queue of new publicans for tenancies shortens. And high costs for landlords have often led to an inevitable increase in bar prices, which has dissuaded many people from crossing the pub threshold for a pint, on a regular basis. It is clearly a difficult squeeze for landlord and drinker alike.

Nevertheless, pubs are at the very heart of Hertfordshire's tradition, remaining great social centres for conversation and are



our top choice when meeting friends for both celebration and commemoration. But if they are going to survive and prosper, we need to convince more people to see it that way and to visit more regularly.

While CAMRA nationally continues to petition the government for beer duty relief, a reduction in business rates and changes to make the VAT system fairer, in Hertfordshire, we feel it is also time for our locally led pub-supporting campaign to increase visibility

on the ground at pub level, so that as many people as possible get the message.

It really is time to enjoy a pint in your Local – do please spread the word. Pubs should always have “A place in our Herts”.

**Les Middlewood**

Pubs Protection Officer  
South Herts CAMRA



# World-Wise *Webb*

## *Why big breweries do not work in the UK*

### *Part 3: it's the economy, stupid!*

In the first part of this series, I traced how the last forty years have seen UK brewing taken over, in stages, by four foreign-owned corporations that, after turning beer into a commodity, watched consumption halve, during a time when general alcohol consumption remained the same – without them admitting to any link between these two trends.

In the second part, I looked at how this affected traditional British brewing – and, more broadly, the higher end of the beer

market – as the leaders of this failing industry continued to brew beers that suited their company structure, rather than their keenest customers.

In this final part, I will look at the impact this has on the UK economy.  
**Beer money**

Beer contributes to Britain's fortunes in three main ways.

Beer brewing raises taxes through Excise Duty (one of the highest levels in Europe), National Insurance, and its employees paying income tax. The sale of beer reaps a lot more tax, via VAT in both the hospitality sector and off-licence trade (half of beer is now sold in supermarkets). Finally, exporting beer brings in much-needed revenues from abroad.

Despite the opportunities for growth, currently UK brewing is failing comprehensively in all its potential areas of expansion. Production and sales have fallen consistently, exports are minimal, and the large companies' collective approach to the trade is set to change nothing.

Independent brewers like to grow, and when they do, they create jobs in their local economies, which is where they pay their taxes. Corporate brewers prefer to improve their margins, which they do by cutting jobs wherever possible. Where they pay taxes depends on what their advisors say – regular scams include investing substantial amounts in tax-deductable “research and development” that produces remarkably few advances.

#### **Terribly nice but dull**

On the sales side, the main aim of the corporates is to shore up their share of the deteriorating lager market, as they are failing to do in many of beer's other core markets, in Europe and elsewhere. To do this they image UK-made, UK-spec lagers as authentically foreign; sell their large-scale ales as local,

regional or “craft”; and have now started selling processed beers via hand pumps for that “All-important hand-pull theatre and serve”. (That’s Carlsberg again.)

The pub trade has been failing year-on-year for four decades. While its recent woes can be attributed to a huge tax burden, changes in spending patterns, and problems finding staff post-Brexit, more relevant to the longer-term decline is the rise of the PubCo. Most of the large ones that control half of Britain’s pubs, and a high proportion of the smaller ones, limit what their licensees can sell, through supply or line cleaning contracts, meaning a majority are left to sell a dull range of misleading brands, often at high prices.

### The export trail

The corporate failures on the production and sales side can be attributed to a beer market that is so distorted as to almost looks rigged. On the other hand, the failure of UK brewing to contribute to exports, is far more a predictable result of multinational ownership.

For many years, the UK has been Europe’s largest importer of beer, mostly due to a few big-brand lagers being cheaper to make abroad. On the export side, UK brewing ruled the waves for a couple of centuries, and beer styles of UK origin, like porter, stout, pale ale,

IPA, barley wine and others, punched big in the global market for bottled and canned beers.

However, while Belgian, Czech and German brewers are key providers of those countries’ beer styles, in the export market, UK brewers supply very few of the British beers. In part, this is down to independent breweries being let down by the failure to negotiate a post-Brexit agreement with the EU around smaller-volume beers. To a far greater extent, it is because the UK’s big-name beers, nowadays, are exactly the brands that are made elsewhere. Multinational companies gain nothing from exporting to themselves.

### The bottom line



In short, an industry now ruled by corporate giants has lost half of its UK market to more distinctive drinks, is actively contributing to the parlous state of the pub trade, and is failing the UK economy, all at the same time.

Is it just me, or should something be done about this?

**Tim Webb**  
Beer Writer

Co-author, *The World Atlas of Beer*  
Exeter & Devon CAMRA

## The 8 PubCos with 1,000 or more pubs

1	2	3	4
 <p>No. of pubs: 4,500+</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 2,623</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 2,400</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 1,700+</p>
5	6	7	8
 <p>No. of pubs: 1,422</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 1,414</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 1,300</p>	 <p>No. of pubs: 1,100</p>

(Courtesy of *The Morning Advertiser*)

# Readers Write



## Mac's Zero

Hi Paul,

Like Lawrence Shulman in PoV314, I am a CAMRA member and cask ale drinker, and I thought I'd add my two pennies worth to the McMullen guest ale debate, as this issue has crossed my mind on multiple occasions.



I read with interest Tom McMullen's defence of their long-held policy to not allow guest ales and it had me shaking my head with disbelief. For most of my adult life (I'm now 58) I have enjoyed cycling the countryside of North Herts and popping into some of the excellent real ale pubs in the area (Lordship Arms, Lytton Arms, Red Lion Preston, Half Moon, Strathmore Arms etc.) for a well-earned pint of cask ale.

In that time, I have travelled thousands of miles, but I couldn't tell you the last time I popped into a McMullen pub, despite cycling past many of them on a regular basis.

Q. Why would that be, when there are some lovely Mac's pubs in this area - beautiful old pubs with wonderful summer beer gardens in which to enjoy a pint or three? The Rising Sun at Halls Green and North Star at Welwyn are two examples that spring to mind. [Ed: though the North Star has now been sold to a developer - see p50 Down Your Way, Oaklands]

A. Because they don't serve guest ales!

A third would have been the Robin Hood & Little John at Rabley Heath, but Mac's have recently sold it, since when an empty Mac's pub in a great country location is now a thriving free house - I wonder why that is?

I'm not against Mac's beers - AK and Country are fine examples of this country's brewing tradition - but why would I stop at one of their pubs, to be faced with the same limited choice of beers, when there are other pubs in North Herts that regularly serve many ales from breweries across the UK?

To my simple mind McMullen are shooting themselves in the foot, with an outdated policy that doesn't work in today's competitive market. Real-ale drinkers no longer have to accept traditional brewers selling only their traditional ales - and I'm a classic example of that.

As Steve Dunkley rightly points out in his original article, simply allowing one or two guest beers in tied pubs shouldn't pose a threat to any brewery genuinely confident in its product.

And my point to Tom McMullen would be this:

If you allowed only a couple of guest ales to be served, you could get potential customers like me visiting your pubs.

Yes, we might start on a guest beer but then we might also enjoy a Mac's beer after that and also a bit of food. That would, hopefully, lead to an incremental increase in turnover and profit.

But Tom, it gets better than that, because we might then start bringing friends and family to your pubs to enjoy the guest and Mac's ales, and we might all eat meals there, and maybe even begin to enjoy regular trips. That could lead to a much larger increase in turnover and, hopefully, profit!

It's like all customer-facing retail businesses - you can't sell anything to me if I'm not in the shop.

And all that could be the result of such a seemingly small business development proposal as simply selling a few guest beers in your pubs!

Cheers

**John Chamberlain**

Letchworth Garden City

**Ed says:** *A couple of weeks ago, I was in Bridport and 'did' the Palmers brewery tour. The guide, a chap named David Hewitt, is an active member of West Dorset CAMRA, and was absolutely superb. Very well informed, personable, and happy to take and answer questions.*



*Knowing that Palmers have a tied estate, I popped the question: "Should the pubs be serving guest beers?" As I have neither a recording, nor any notes, I'll paraphrase the immediate and unequivocal response (though only slightly): "Absolutely not! Why would Palmers go the expense of running an estate of about 50 pubs and let other breweries benefit from taking over the hand pumps?"*

*I answered along the lines that, whilst Palmers brew excellent beers, and have some lovely pubs, some drinkers prefer a different style of beer, or simply like to be given a choice. I mentioned the similarity between Palmers and McMullen, which David was happy to accept. It turns out that he once lived in our parts, and continues to have a lot of respect for Mac's.*

*I conclude that some long-established Independent Family Brewers regard ring-fencing as essential to the survival of their breweries, beers and pubs. Furthermore, another brewery is seen as an existential threat, rather than a potential partner.*

*No argument to the contrary, however logical, is likely to change that.*



**Have your say! Email [editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk)**

## Crafty Chappy

Hi Paul,

First of all, I wanted to congratulate you on an excellent edition.

Fat yes, but not because of white space or large photos... but full of good content.

### The corruption of "craft"

The success CAMRA once enjoyed for championing cask could become faded history, if current trends cannot be moderated.

According to banners on display at beer festivals and the beer menus at many GBG listed pubs, "craft" is now more a matter of dispense, and not so much brew quality. Keg (and can) are now craft irrespective of the liquid inside. Cask is...? What...?

Notwithstanding the points made by Pete Brown and Tim Martin; the label 'craft' should refer to a product created with a degree of passion over profit and we urgently need to claim it back from the marketing men who appoint it to any average product dispensed from keg.

At a recent festival, working on the foreign bar, I served the same person, full pints from the same keg three times. It was an OK product, but I wondered what he was doing at a beer festival. Then I wondered what I was doing at a festival, or why we bother with festivals at all.

Keg has a place, and at festivals, it is the perfect backup should cask sell out, but it shouldn't be the other way around, with keg selling out and cask being poured down the drain. I hear people say: "craft keg attracts younger people". Well if that's the case, it ain't working. Neither is it the point. If young people think keg is for them and cask not worth trying, they need educating.

As a further example of the problem we face, and at a recent visit to a local Wetherspoons, I was attracted by the pump-clip of an

*Trained St Albans Beer Festival Volunteer... caught on a break.*



Photo: Will Lewis

old favourite, then while I'm sitting there with my pint of Gone Fishing, which was even better than I ever remembered it. I look around... here am I, with a pint of pure nectar... but, I'm the *only one* drinking it. I feel honoured and sad at the same time. Never mind what other imbibers were drinking, and whatever their choice, I reject the notion of individual taste; it's more to do with individual ignorance. People who are not willing to try will never know.

Meanwhile, we in CAMRA need to work with the industry to market cask alongside keg and in a similar way. Festivals should be more about education and tasting experiences and less about familiarity.

**Malcolm Chapman**



**Have your say! Email [editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk](mailto:editor@pintsofview.camra.org.uk)**

**Ed says:** Thanks Malcolm, for both your kind starter and the no-nonsense main course that followed. Allow me to provide the desert...

Many believe that the term 'craft' was coined in the mid-noughties, to describe a style of beer produced by the growing number of small breweries that sprung up as a consequence of 'Small Brewers' Relief', introduced in 2002 by Chancellor Gordon Brown.

However, if you blow the dust off a copy of the GBG Millennium Edition, inside you'll find articles written by the guide's editor, a certain Roger Protz, in which he often refers to 'craft breweries'. Bear in mind the publication date was late 1999...

In the context of Roger's writing, it is very clear that he associated the term with small/medium-sized breweries owned and run by brewers, as opposed to owned by external shareholders and run by accountants. And he still does.

I do think that CAMRA dropped the ball by getting tied up in knots due to 'craft' being undefinable. And as for the idea of BANNING the word...

Unlike you and Roger, I must confess to thinking of 'craft beer' as predominantly American influenced, having a big new-world hop-forward flavour, and being served below traditional cellar temperature. I certainly do not think that keg dispense defines it, but I accept that is the usual method.

What I disagree with is the idea that keg equates to mediocrity. Whilst keg can be average, it can also be very good; cask, on the other hand, ranges from excellent all the way down to vinegar. Yes, I know... because it requires love, attention, trained publicans and sufficient throughput to ensure that a cask is consumed before the quality nose dives.

This applies to most things artisanal.

A cheese produced on a small dairy

farm might taste great, but, then again, might not. On the other hand, a cheese produced in a factory will taste good, again, and again, and again... But where the farm-produced cheese will sell for £40 per kg, the mass-produced alternative will be below £10 per kg.

Now compare this with beer, where drinkers demand cask to significantly undercut keg. Or maybe that's just CAMRA members who tend to drink multiple pints rather than a couple of halves.

Anyway, where I agree 100% with you, Malcolm, is your line that "People who are not willing to try will never know" and that a festival should be a place to showcase cask and an opportunity for trained volunteers to help seasoned lager drinkers explore new styles. Bear in mind, though, that you might need a keg lager offering to tempt them along in the first place, and you'll also absolutely, definitely, need working coolers.

## The new Paper Inn St Albans desk pub calendar is out

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## No firkin beer

Paul,

This is the scene at the bar at the Pommel Horse, Jarman Park, Hemel Hempstead. You might expect to order a pint of any of the Greene King ales displayed on the beer pumps. But no; you can have only bottles of these beers.

The barmaid said there was little demand for real ale and they had had to throw away the contents of barrels [or, more correctly, firkins = 72 pints] as they only lasted 3 days after opening. But the beer pumps remain, which is misleading potential customers. The pub is part of the Hungry Horse chain, but I haven't checked if their other pubs have stopped serving real ale.

**Steve**  
St Albans

**Ed says:** Thanks for taking the photo and writing in. There are a few things to comment on here:

- 1) I'm actually thankful that a pub takes off cask when the throughput is insufficient, rather than be tempted to keep it on when it's past its best.
- 2) As for misleading customers, well this is certainly no Handpump Hijack, where keg beer is deceitfully poured via a cask-style handpull. I'd wager that if any customer orders a pint, they'll be offered a bottle and given an explanation, should it be asked for. Furthermore, it could be argued that it's at least advertising the bottled beer (though it's not bottle-conditioned real ale) and also, if enough people, like you, query why there's no cask, perhaps they'll give 'pins' a try, which leads me to:
- 3) Has the pub considered 36 pint 'pins', rather than 72 pint 'firkins'? The Hungry Horse chain is owned by Greene King,



which lists all three of the beers as available in the smaller size. i.e. IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Old Speckled Hen Low Alcohol.

Of course, you could make the Google-calculated 0.7 mile trek to the Hop Tap in central Hemel, though how it compares with its forbear, the much-loved Monks Inn, I know not.

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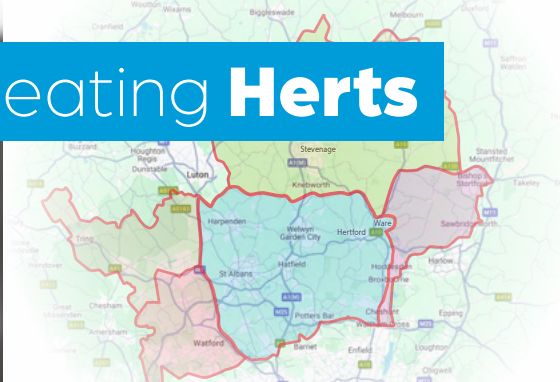
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# Beating Herts



Herts Branch, as the A10 carried on north to the junction with the A120 at Standon.

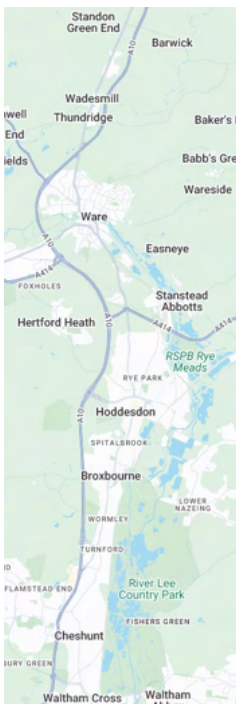
## The Great Divide

From time to time, readers ask where our Hertfordshire CAMRA Branch boundaries are and when were they formed. Take the boundary between South Herts Branch and Herts & Essex Borders (HEB) Branch for instance.

With South Herts Branch already in existence and covering much of east Hertfordshire, HEB was formed in early 1976 to take over some of this territory, so a new boundary needed to be set between the two Branches.

In those early CAMRA days, the A10 (Great Cambridge Road) ran north from London, along the Lea Valley, west of Waltham Cross, through Cheshunt, by-passing Broxbourne and Hoddesdon, then west of Ware (the viaduct opened soon, also in 1976) and on to the villages of Thundridge and Wadesmill. It was decided that any pub physically on the A10 (both sides of the road) would be allocated to HEB, whilst anything west of that would remain in the South Herts area. A similar arrangement was made with North

In the south, somewhat incongruously, Cheshunt was split with the few pubs to the west of the A10 in its Churchgate area, the Crocodile and the now-closed Green Dragon and the three pubs of the adjoining Flamstead End all being retained by South Herts - the Plough, White Horse (now a Tesco) and Jolly Bricklayers, now renamed as the Freemasons. All other pubs in Cheshunt were gained by HEB as were those in Turnford, Wormley, Broxbourne, Hoddesdon and Great Amwell. However, a big exception to the rule was Ware which, in its entirety, was retained by South Herts.



Later, in 2004, came the A10 dual carriageway extension by-passing Wadesmill and the villages north of it, leading to the 'old' A10 becoming a quieter backwater. The Branches boundary remained here. Along this stretch only the Feathers Inn at Wadesmill survives, the new by-pass eventually suffocating trade for the others - though the Sow and Pigs in Thundridge is now a restaurant.

Back down south, the Galley Hall in Hailey, near Hoddesdon, was also originally retained by South Herts, HEB inheriting it around twenty years ago - you'll usually find copies of *Pints of View* in there.

That's about it. I'm not sure there's anybody else still active in Herts CAMRA who will remember those details - I'm amazed I can!

**Les Middlewood**  
South Herts CAMRA



# Brewer's View

So, to my surprise during a visit to the BrauBeviale, Nuremburg 2024 Trade Fair, I came across FreeKeg and immediately realised that this was the perfect answer! A multi-use keg that can be reused by inserting a new bag is not new – as mentioned above, I'd been using and reusing i-Kegs in the tap room. The problem, however, with that system is that it can't be shipped out of the brewery without potentially losing the cost of the keg (£50ish). In contrast, FreeKeg outer containers have the potential to be returned by end users (pubs and bars) into a distribution network for reuse at other breweries, much like standard returnable keg.

## FreeKeg A Cask & Keg Game Changer

From the very early days of Six Hills Brewing, we've searched hard for a draught packaging solution that ticks all the boxes. Whilst most of the brewery's output is dispensed in its tap room, increasingly more is delivered to the wider UK market.

Sadly, whilst traditional cask no longer features due to the difficulties of cleaning casks in-house – we simply don't have the room or the storage space – the good news is that a modern 'green' alternative is now available.

Over the years, I've used KeyKeg, PolyKeg, i-Keg and Kegstar, but none of them is a one-size-fits-all solution. We settled on a combination of bagged i-Keg for our tap room and Kegstar for distribution, though always hoped that there'd be a better, more sustainable and eco-friendly solution. The thought of shipping steel across the country, or supposedly recycling KeyKegs or PolyKegs, never sat well with us.



Beer Concept, the company behind FreeKeg, is based in Denmark, and it was their CEO Janus Hansen that I met at the trade fair. He explained both the technical benefits of FreeKeg and the financial benefit of it being at the **same price point as KeyKeg** which, of course, is a one-trip container that's non-reusable.

If adopted fully in the UK, FreeKeg will save 80% of plastic waste associated with KeyKeg, reduce shipping costs associated with steel kegs, and encourage breweries to collect the kegs for refill (using new bags).

I was so excited by this product that I invited Janus and his colleagues to stay at my home in Stevenage so that we could test the product in the brewery - Six Hills was the first to fill these kegs in the UK. It took a while to get the first stock of kegs and bags, but they arrived late spring and, following successful trials, we became the first brewery to fully adopt the system.



They are very easy to fill and store, the beer pours perfectly, and they seem to be more robust than some other bagged systems - to date, I've had no leaking bags or bags that have lost their vacuum seal.

I've even started serving 'cask' once again - our Hanging Around West Coast Pale Ale, conditioned in the FreeKeg and poured using an adapted KeyKeg coupler. This is another game changer - perfectly sealed cask-

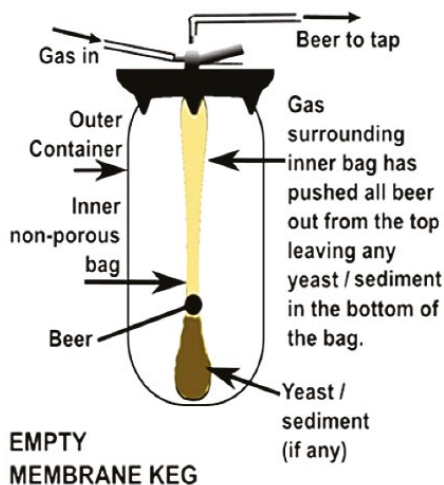
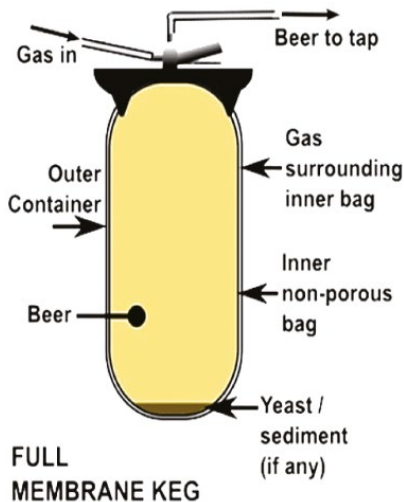
conditioned ale, with a long shelf life and very little chance of spoilage. Furthermore, it can be shipped at reduced cost, with no beer wastage, in a fully reusable keg. I shudder to think how many pints of beer are wasted every year due to the very short shelf life once a traditional cask is vented.

It will take some adaption of beer lines to suit the new keg, but the upside is enormous. We can also start selling and serving in 20 or 30 litres, rather than the near 41 litres of a standard cask (a furkin). Longer life and smaller containers will, undoubtedly, make 'cask' ale more accessible and could be the catalyst needed to revive the real ale market.

With a little help from us, Janus has now secured access to market via leading brewing industry suppliers Murphy & Son in Nottingham, and as the early signs are very positive, I hope to see a steady roll-out of these innovative kegs.

Going forward, Beer Concept is working on being able to provide the FreeKeg free of charge if a quantity of bags are purchased. Even more reason to adopt the new system. I wonder if we'd be allowed to call it FreeCask?

**Paul Clinton**  
 Founder and CEO  
 Six Hills Brewing





# Beer Belle

## Healthoholic Beverage Beer!

Politicians of all persuasions love to be seen pulling a pint of beer from the cask – usually in a crowded pub (though sometimes at a beer festival) and always with a broad grin. The image is clearly intended to convey a positive, unambiguous message, along the lines of: *“I enjoy connecting with the (voting) public and I’m a big supporter of both pubs and real ale, as they’re quintessentially British, traditional and wholesome.”*

Yet, the very same image is more often used in newspapers and on TV to illustrate reports discussing concerns about the negative impact of alcohol on the nation’s health. One of my colleagues calls this ‘lazy journalism’ because it implies that beer is the problem.

Undoubtedly, excessive consumption of any alcoholic beverage can adversely affect health, behaviour, and performance; however, beer is often unfairly subjected to negative associations about alcohol intake.

So, let’s set the record straight with a few facts.

Beer, when drunk in moderation, is not unhealthy. Throughout the ages it was

referred to as “liquid bread”, a nutritious, thirst-quenching beverage made from all natural ingredients. Beer contains zero fat and zero cholesterol.

A key ingredient in beer is barley. When malted, barley is a rich source of the B-vitamin group including niacin, riboflavin, pyridoxine, and folate. Recognise these words? Take a look at the ingredients on your breakfast cereal box – yes, that’s where you saw them. Now look at your moisturiser or hand cream – yes, they’re there again! These are also the vitamins which protect against cardiovascular disease in far greater concentration than found in red wine and spirits.

Beer contains a high concentration of naturally occurring silicon; it’s found in the husk of malted barley and is dissolved into the fluid of the beer we drink. Why does silicon matter? It plays an important part in the synthesis of collagen, the protein found in hair, nails, tendons and skin. More importantly it makes bones denser, preventing the onset of osteoporosis, a disease which affects three million Britons.

Hops, the plants which give beer its bitterness and aromatics, are brimming with healthy properties. They are a natural antibacterial agent and were widely used as a medicine in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to protect against and fight off infections. Hops reputedly ease constipation, sooth anxieties and battle insomnia. Most over-the-counter herbal remedies to promote better sleep contain hop-oil extract.

We are constantly told to “hydrate, hydrate, hydrate” by drinking plenty of water. Drinks with a high-alcohol content, such as wines and spirits, dehydrate because they increase the amount of water the body loses. On the other hand, regular strength beer contains much less alcohol, and because it comprises around 95% water, is far more hydrating.

Of all the myths surrounding beer, none is more enduring than that of the link between beer drinking and weight gain. However,

beer itself has a relatively low calorific value compared to the calorie content found in other alcoholic drinks. Half a pint of 3.8% beer contains approximately 85 calories. To put this into context, a single gin and tonic clocks up about 120 calories, and a medium-size glass of white wine around 130.

If beer has zero fat and is relatively low in calories, why does it get blamed for the belly? Firstly, we consume beer in far larger quantities (volume) than other drinks. Secondly, whilst all alcohol is an appetite stimulant, the hop bitterness in beer dials up cravings for all the 'wrong' types of food: carbohydrate-laden burgers, pizza, and kebabs, for example. Although beer is not particularly high in calories, the dietary decisions made following its consumption often contribute significantly to overall calorie intake. Maybe rethink that trip to the takeaway after your next night out?

Overall, it's time for the media, and drinkers, to re-evaluate the positive aspects of moderate beer consumption and present it in a more



honest and constructive light. From a health and lifestyle perspective, it ticks all the right boxes.

**Annabel Smith**

Beer Sommelier & Writer  
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# For Pete's Sake

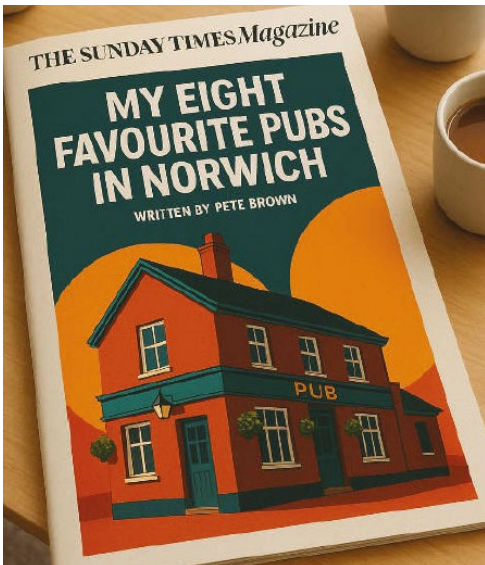
## Norwich Pubs

*Another City of Ale to compare with St Albans*

I've been writing a regular beer and pubs column for the Sunday Times Magazine for about eight months now. It's going well. So well, that the 14 September issue featured my eight favourite pubs in Norwich.

This is trickier than it sounds.

I could only choose eight. And you have to bear in mind with articles like this that you're writing primarily for the entertainment of others. When the piece comes out, pub-goers in Norwich will, I hope, be happy to see



the city being celebrated like this (even those who think articles like this are 'pointless' because they're behind a paywall. Guess what? Paywalls mean writers get paid.)

But if I'd gone with my first list of eight pubs, seven of them would have been in NR3, and readers in NR1 and NR2 would not have been happy at all about that. I don't think the pubs in NR3 are better than those in NR2 or NR1. But I live in NR3, and I'd have to walk past a lot of great pubs that are very close to me to get to the great pubs that are further away. And it's hard to walk past great pubs.

The same happens when you're doing lists of pubs or tap rooms around the country. If I'd really given my list of ten favourite pubs in the country for my first article back in February, four would have been in Norwich, one in Burton on Trent, four in Sheffield and one in London. This 100 per cent honest article would have upset most of the country. So I chose ten pubs that I love that were evenly spread across the UK. People in the comments thought it was highly dubious that my ten favourite pubs just happened to have such an even spread and accused me of lying. You can't win.

Back to Norwich. Once I'd exercised some diplomacy and made my pubs an even spread between the three main postcodes, I realised I'd had to miss out several pubs that are better than the best pubs in many other

cities I've visited. As a thought experiment, I pretended the eight pubs I had chosen all suddenly ceased to exist. Instantly, I came up with a list of another eight pubs that I could have run in their place. It was only when I got halfway down my third list of eight before I had to even start thinking about whether these pubs were less than perfect.

I didn't have this high-quality problem – or at least not to this extent – with the pubs of Sheffield or even London. Which begs the question: why is Norwich blessed with such a ridiculously large number of phenomenal pubs?

I was even more surprised, having moved here almost two years ago, when I spoke to people who told me this hadn't always been the case. That some of the pubs I adored were quite rough places back in the day. I find it staggering to hear that the city's reputation for cask ale didn't exist twenty or thirty years ago.

If it were possible to give an exact answer to the question why, you'd bottle it and send it to cities across the country. The real answer is a complex mix of cultural, social and economic factors. I think City of Ale played a big part in promoting Norwich and its pubs as a beer destination. But it was already doing pretty well by the time that started in 2011. I've found the local CAMRA branch to be open, energetic and forward-thinking, which means things happen as opposed to simply being argued about. There's an independent spirit here too, across everything – I don't get the sense of any one brewer or PubCo dominating the city. What's striking when you come in from outside is that you see brewer after brewer on hand-pumps around the city that I've never seen anywhere else in the country.

A young student population also helps. And once this cycle gets going, it just gets stronger. People arrive here aged eighteen or nineteen, at the start of their drinking careers. Their preferences haven't formed, so when they see cask ale on the bar, and notice that it's cheaper than other drinks, they try it. Many of them stay in Norwich when they graduate, so they stick with it. Because cask is popular, anyone taking over or opening a pub realises they have to stock it, and on the cycle goes.

Then there are the individuals who run these pubs, who go out of their way to create something special. They do what no big company, training manual or marketing campaign can do; creating something real and unique, rooted in its community, that resonates with people.

Perhaps Norwich is just really lucky to have so many of them. I just hope the ones that didn't make it into my *Sunday Times* piece will forgive me.

**Pete Brown**

*Author, Broadcaster, Beer Lover  
Beer Writer of the Year 2021, 2016,  
2012, 2009*

[www.petebrown.net/pete-brown-blog](http://www.petebrown.net/pete-brown-blog)  
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Photo: © Nic Crilly-Hargrave

# Hoppy Lotte

of spirits, cider, hard kombucha (fermented tea, sugar and yeast), hard seltzers, hard tea, ready-to-drink cocktails, along with gluten-free and low/no-alcohol options, proved that they all have a place in today's contemporary drinking culture.

## Beyond the Glass

More than a tasting event, GABF has become a multi-sensory celebration. Breweries were grouped into themed zones such as *Prost!* (a tribute to German Biergartens), *Score!* (a sports-themed hub), *Fright!* (Halloween-inspired), and *Blast Off!* (showcasing "beyond beer" beverages). Also, a *Meet the Brewer* section, *Chill* (a backyard-style space with live music and lawn games) and the new Mile High Stage for live music and entertainment.

Running alongside the main festival, PAIRED united Michelin-starred chefs with world-class brewers, offering guests exquisite beer-and-food combinations that pushed the limits of pairing creativity. With 500 breweries, cideries, and distilleries pouring more than 2,000 beverages, GABF once again delivered something for every palate. Latest trends are:

## The Haze Craze Lives On

Even after a decade in the spotlight, juicy/hazy IPAs continue to dominate the U.S. craft beer landscape. Recognised as an official style by the Brewers Association in 2018, it remains the most competitive category at both GABF and the World Beer Cup.

The wide range of "hazies" at the festival proved the style's staying power, with brewers refining mouthfeel, developing aroma and flavour, and layering complexity while maintaining that subdued bitterness that appeals to both newcomers and IPA loyalists. A flagship example like *Sierra Nevada Hazy Little Thing* (6.7% ABV), was launched in 2018 and is now the best-selling hazy IPA in America, and widely available around the world.

## Great Beer Festivals!

**America trending** 😊  
**Britain ending** 😞

Beer lovers have much reason to thank the (late) CAMRA Great British Beer Festival (GBBF), because it gave rise to the Great American Beer Festival (GABF), America's premier beer event, held annually in Denver, Colorado, and organised by the Brewers Association (BA), the not-for-profit trade group representing small and independent American craft brewers.

The latest GABF drew many tens of thousands of attendees and, once again, showcased the breadth and creativity of today's beverage scene. While beer remained the undisputed star of the show, the presence

## Lager Than Life

Long hailed as “the next big thing”, lager had its moment at GABF. Brewers showcased an eclectic array of lager brewing excellence from *Firestone Walker Pivo Pils* (5.3% ABV) to *Deschutes’ Fresh Hop King Crispy* (4.8% ABV), plus dry-hopped, smoked, fruit-infused, and salt-lime variations. Classic European styles, from Japanese rice and Italian pilsners to Oktoberfest Märzens, Dunkels, and Schwarzbiers, reinforced lager’s growing popularity.

## Packaging Innovation

Sierra Nevada Brewing Co has recently taken the bold move of launching their German style pilsner, *PILS* in 8.4oz (250ml) cans, designed to reflect European drinking culture and keep the beer “fresh and cold from first to last sip.” Look out for it in export markets shortly. At the other end of the spectrum, the 19.2oz (568ml) ‘stovepipe’ can continues to gain popularity with U.S. drinkers looking for value and convenience.

included Athletic Brewing Co, Deschutes, Sierra Nevada, and Samuel Adams, all demonstrating that moderation and flavour can happily coexist.

## The Competition

This year’s GABF competition evaluated 8,315 entries from 1,555 breweries and cideries, awarding 347 medals to 273 producers. Notable winners included Allagash Brewing Co, taking gold for *Allagash Tripel* and *Allagash Lager*, plus the prestigious Brewery Group of the Year award. Oskar Blues also struck gold with *Dale’s Pale Ale*.

The most entered categories? Juicy/Hazy IPA, West Coast IPA, Oktoberfest, German Pilsner, and Hoppy Lager

## Evolving with the Times

From its humble beginnings in 1982, when just 700 people gathered in Boulder, Colorado, Great American Beer Festival remains a benchmark of brewing excellence. It’s a celebration of creativity, innovation,



Photos: © Brewers Association

## Beyond Beer

For the first time in its 43-year history, GABF introduced a Distilling Experience, with 20 craft distilleries pouring whiskey, gin, vodka, and botanical spirits. The move mirrors a growing trend: one in four U.S. craft breweries now produces beverages other than beer.

## Low and No Alcohol

Reflecting the rise of mindful drinking, low- and no-alcohol beers were a strong presence on the festival floor. Standout producers

and community that continues to adapt to changing tastes while staying true to its craft beer roots. With new categories, diverse beverages, and a spirit of inclusivity, GABF proves that beer and beverages bring people together like nothing else.



**Lotte Peplow**

Beer Sommelier & Writer  
American Craft Beer  
Ambassador for Europe

[www.brewersassociation.org](http://www.brewersassociation.org)  
Richmond & Hounslow CAMRA



# Cheery Porter

However, members reported they cannot sell to 60 per cent of their local pubs, on average, while 79 per cent said beer lines permanently allocated to large brewers are the main obstacle to growth.

With the government currently considering whether there are grounds for legislation to open up beer supply, SIBA chief executive Andy Slee told CAMRA'S online news service, What's Brewing: *"SIBA isn't arguing for abolition of the beer tie per se, it's about making sure that independent brewers and global brewers can live alongside each other, whatever the solution to that is. Some pub companies, such as Greene King, are very supportive, with our members' beers in 25 per cent of the estate. Others are much less so."*

A YouGov poll for the SIBA report showed that 56 per cent of beer drinkers are more

## "Hear, hear" to more guest beer!

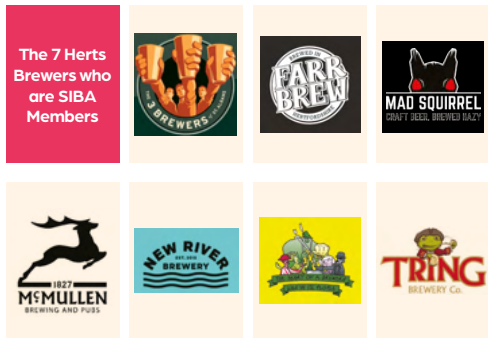
Independent brewers are locked out of 60 per cent of the UK's pubs, due not just to those outlets operating under a formal beer tie, but increasingly because of factors such as brewery loans which include onerous beer supply agreements, and bigger players restricting access to dispense equipment.

A survey of members of the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA), carried out for its Independent Beer Report 2025, found 46 per cent of brewers list simple survival as their number one priority this year. That concern seems well founded, with SIBA's Brewery Tracker recording 1,641 active brewers in the UK market at the end of March 2025, down from 1,777 a year earlier. However, despite the risks, a number of new brewers started up during the 12-month period, and so *more than* 136 will have gone out of business. That's about one in 13, so clearly unlucky for some.

Restricted access to the pub market is key to SIBA brewers' concerns, with 82 per cent of members' beer production packaged in cask and keg format, targeting the on-trade.

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likely to buy a beer if it's locally produced, and 81 per cent feel misled when they discover beers they thought were independent, actually aren't. Slee added: *"These report findings mean we can make the commercial case for pubs to serve independent beers, as well as having conversations at government level."* He suggested that if the government identifies a problem with the current beer supply arrangements to pubs, the industry should try to find a solution before legislation is required.

While cask beer volumes continue to decline, it still accounts for 58 per cent of SIBA members' total production. That represents a five per cent volume share decline in cask production year-on-year. In contrast, stouts, lagers and no- and low-alcohol beers are in growth, which has pushed keg volumes among SIBA members up to 24 per cent of the total, from 18 per cent a year earlier. Darker beers are increasingly popular, and 80 per cent of brewers now produce a stout or a porter. In addition, 60 per cent of SIBA brewers now produce a lager, suggesting independent breweries are making inroads into the market usually dominated by global lager brands.

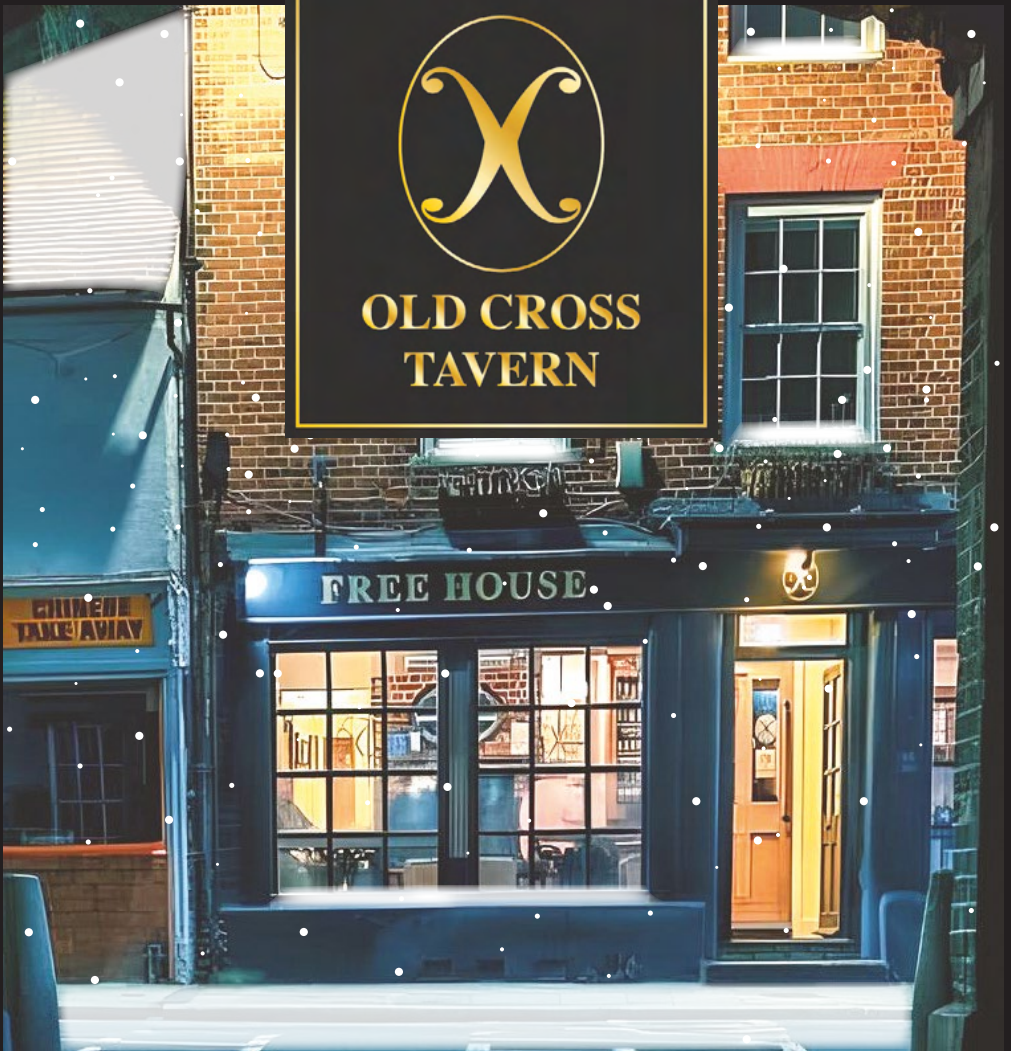
Last year saw SIBA launch its Indie Beer campaign, in a drive to reduce confusion over the use of the term craft. While CGA's data includes beers from global brewers which are positioned as craft beers to consumers, the Indie Beer logo and description is restricted to brewers with less than a one per cent share of the UK beer market, and at least 75 per cent of production in the UK. More than 500 breweries now actively support the campaign.

Andy Slee summed up: *"Cask beer is unique to Britain. To a global drinks company, Europe as a whole is a region. If they're producing loads of beers, and only one country in the region is selling this fiddly cask thing, they're not interested. No matter what bullshit they give out about their passion for cask beer, they're not interested. What makes them money is global lager brands."*

*"So, over the next few years, SIBA can play a role in the rejuvenation of cask beer. There's strong demand for well-brewed, regional cask beers, as well as consumers wanting to support local, independent businesses. My call to the global players is, just because cask is of no interest to you, don't take your bat and ball home. Where we can work alongside each other, it can work well for all of us."*

**John Porter**

British Guild of Beer Writers  
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# Good Beer Guide



## 66 The Number of the Best

Goodbye GBG2025 and *hello!* GBG2026. The TV pubs on the last edition's cover – the Rovers Return and the Woolpack – replaced by an equally familiar and, I presume, fictional Red Lion. The setting is idyllic, depicting fluffy clouds in a bright-blue sky, an equally blue lake, lush green grass, pub garden and a distant church spire reaching up to the horizon. Scandal, then, that there's no Post Office...

And what of the contents? From a Hertfordshire perspective, we're limited to the inclusion of only 66 pubs & clubs. Whilst they've all been judged as serving top-quality beer, you can be sure that many more excellent drinking establishments will not have made it in, due only to lack of space.

Once again, *Pints of View* is indebted to Bob Norrish for updating his ever-growing spreadsheet and highlighting those pubs & clubs worthy of a special mention for having reached 'GBG Milestones'.

One or two of you may have noticed that the Cask & Stillage made it in last year as a first timer, but is back again having reached a GBG 5-entry milestone. How come? The pub changed its name in 2014, following a refurb and I changed the rules of entry in 2025!

Congratulations to all who made it into the Guide, and commiserations to those who were there or thereabouts. Fingers crossed for next year!

**Paul Donatantonio**

	Total	Consecutive
<b>Serial Entrants</b>		
1 <i>Rising Sun, High Wych</i>	52	52
2 <i>Swan, Bushey</i>	47	15
3 <i>Crooked Billet, Colney Heath</i>	43	43
4 <i>King's Arms, Tring</i>	43	43
5 <i>Woodman, Wildhill</i>	41	37
<b>Milestones</b>		
<i>Prince of Wales, Green Tye</i>	30	12
<i>Red Lion, Preston</i>	30	16
<i>Cross Keys, Harpenden</i>	25	17
<i>Old Cross Tavern, Hertford</i>	25	6
<i>Lytton Arms, Old Knebworth</i>	25	4
<i>Mermaid, St Albans</i>	25	4
<i>Bull, London Colney</i>	20	16
<i>Green Man, Sandridge</i>	20	5
<i>Plume of Feathers, Ickleford</i>	15	3
<i>George, Berkhamsted</i>	10	1
<i>Red Lion, Breachwood Green</i>	10	3
<i>Station, Knebworth</i>	5	5
<i>Cask &amp; Stillage (White Horse), Potters Bar</i>	5	2
<i>Broken Seal, Stevenage</i>	5	5
<i>Chequers, Stevenage</i>	5	2
<b>GBG Virgins</b>		
<i>Beehive, St Albans</i>	1	1
<i>Moon Under Water, Watford</i>	1	1

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# Herts CAMRA Awards

## New Silver PotY for Old Cross

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Congratulations to all at the **Old Cross Tavern** for picking up the South Herts Pub of the Year 2025 Silver award. The pub is no stranger to CAMRA awards, but this is the first since James Ashbourne and Dave Redpath took over the reins late in 2023.

Whilst the pub layout and décor has been maintained, James and Dave have brought new tenacity to the cask ale selection with beers now sourced from a much wider band of breweries, including many from the vibrant new-wave brewery scene. There are regular favourites from the likes of the established Mighty Oak, Abbeydale, Hopback and Thornbridge, and occasionally from Hertfordshire breweries such as Tring and New River, and of course there's the ever-popular stalwart, Timothy Taylor. And if you are wondering what's coming next, there's a wall of pump clips revealing beers in the cellar soon to be unleashed. No surprise then that there are now four eagerly-awaited beer festivals every year.

Though cask ale is very much to the fore, there is still space for a changing selection of craft keg beers and a wide range of Belgian and foreign bottled beers.

The pub's interior, with winter fires, features as a 'Heritage Pub of the Future' in the CAMRA book *East of England - Real Heritage Pubs*, which is a collection of pub interiors of special historic interest. Outside at the back is a covered patio that's popular in the warmer months.

With a young band of friendly and informative staff, and a loyal band of thirsty customers, the pub thrives and holds on to its long-held ethos of no piped background music. It's just conversation, fun and laughter filling the air, interrupted only by a rare foray into acoustic music, a quiz, or maybe the Tuesday evening poker session.

Our presentation took place at the pub's August Beer Festival which featured eight



(L-R): Ian Boyd, South Herts Chair, with Amelia Lee, Dave Redpath & Joe Yaxley.

beers on the patio stillage and around fifteen or more over the weekend, regularly replenishing the pub's eight handpumps.

With James away on holiday, the award was picked up in the Festival yard by Dave, along with Frankie Belshaw (missing from the photo), Amelia and Joe. The OXT later posted "*Big thanks to all our brilliant customers, the hard-working team, and, of course, to CAMRA, for the continued support. We'll keep the beer flowing, the casks perfectly conditioned, and the standards high*".

The Old Cross Tavern is open Mon 2-9pm; Tue-Thu 2-11pm; Fri-Sat 12-midnight and Sun 2-9pm. See the pub advert on p26.

**Les Middlewood**  
South Herts CAMRA

### The Mermaid

98 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 3RL  
**South Herts Branch Pub of the Year 2025  
Bronze Award**



(L-R): John Cusworth, Mark Powell and Grace Simpson, with Ian Boyd, South Herts Chair

# The Sun Keeps Rising

*High Wych Road, High Wych,  
CM21 0HZ*

Down in the bottom right-hand corner of Hertfordshire, and just north of Harlow Essex, lies the small, but perfectly formed, village of High Wych. Point to note: there is no other Wych, low, middle or otherwise, anywhere close. The village's single surviving pub is the **Rising Sun**, a traditional gem and an ale-drinkers delight, having appeared in every CAMRA Good Beer Guide (GBG) since the second edition of 1975 – that's 52 in all, whatever the certificate might say!

Dating back to 1864, when it was run by Harlow (now Old Harlow) brewer Thomas Chapman, in 1926 the pub became part of the Barclay Perkins estate, which merged with Courage in 1955 to become Courage & Barclay, and then, in 1970, just plain 'Courage', when the Barclay name was dropped. Wind forward to the late 1980s and the pub was one to benefit from the 'Beer Orders'; a piece of legislation forcing the 'big six' brewers that dominated pub ownership to downsize their estates to a maximum of 2,000 tied pubs. In the case of the Rising Sun, it became an independent Free House and has remained so to this day.

In 1957, the pub's licence passed to Iris Puncher on the death of her father, William Oakley. Iris ran the pub, first with her husband Sid, and later with her nephew, Steve Prior. Sid was evidently quite a character, as, according to the 2009 GBG, the pub was still known as 'Sid's' more than two decades after he and Iris had retired in 1987, when Steve and his wife Jenny then ran the pub and she became licensee.

After Jenny died in 2004, the pub was taken over by Sharon and Gary Cunningham, and, once again, the female of the duo took on the licence, which she has held ever since, now jointly with her daughter, Lauren.

## The Rising Sun

*Good Beer Guide*

*1975 -2026*

*without a break!*



*Graham Darby (HEB Chair) & Lauren  
Cunningham (Rising Sun Licensee)*

When Sharon and Gary arrived, renovation was in order, as the pub was very basic and in poor condition. The former three small rooms were turned into the present two-room format with a new, larger serving bar, but with the original character preserved, by means of stone and wood flooring in the side lounge, two attractive bare-brick fireplaces with wood burners, wood panelling and tasteful décor. The pub was also given proper toilets! What did not change was the beer being real ale only and dispensed by gravity – rare back then and even more so today.

The Rising Sun is a quiet oasis of a pub, loved by the local community. There's neither TV nor piped music, be it pumping jazz, soul, rock or techno. On HEB's visit for a joint branch meeting and special GBG award presentation on Monday 11 August, a good crowd of locals included the female vicar. Beers were *Tring Ridgeway 4.0%* and *Fanny Ebbs 3.9%*, plus *Oakham Citra 4.2%* and (*Fuller's*) *Dark Star Hophead 3.4%* – all, unsurprisingly, excellent.

**Norman Samuels**

*Pubs Officer*

*Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA*

# The Royston Club

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**12 College Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 5ND**

**01727 853656  @roystonclub**

# Ale Trips & Trails

## 314/315 Reasons for a Pint Take the Bus to the Pub

In a joint venture between CAMRA, Hertfordshire County Council's Intalink team and Centrebus, a new free bus and real ale guide has been produced for the 314/315 bus service route which runs from Welwyn Garden City to Hitchin, taking in the villages of Welwyn, Codicote, Kimpton, Whitwell, St. Paul's Walden and Chapelfoot.

Information in the fold-out leaflet has been penned by local CAMRA members, the layout designed and produced by Intalink. The publication lists all of the pubs that sell cask ale along the bus route with comments and information on each. It includes symbols for pub facilities, town and route maps, and general information on the area covered, plus ticketing options.

The 314/315 route, operated by Centrebus, was chosen as there is a good range of pubs and cask ale along the way. The project supports both Intalink's and CAMRA's policy to promote the use of public transport in Hertfordshire. CAMRA also sees it as part of its continuing support for the pubs in the county.

The leaflets are being distributed by both the North Herts and South Herts branches of CAMRA – stocks can be found in each of the featured pubs along the route, in local libraries, tourist offices, on the buses themselves, plus at nearby CAMRA events.

An online copy can be found on the CAMRA South Herts Branch website: <https://southherts.camra.org.uk/campaigning/local-pub-guides/>. Also look out for postings from all three organisations on social media.



### Give it a go!

Why not leave the car at home and enjoy an afternoon in the countryside, supping a pint or two of cask ale and letting the bus carry you along. Buses run hourly Monday – Saturday, whilst pub opening hours are longest on Fridays and Saturdays.

The allied 314/315 timetable can be found at Intalink: <https://www.intalink.org.uk/services/>.

CAMRA and Intalink are considering a similar guide for another local bus route – for publication in 2026.

**Les Middlewood**  
South Herts CAMRA

**By the way!** A second edition of the recent **Hertford Loop Line Rail Ale Trail** booklet has been published with copies being distributed in Hertfordshire to the included pubs and Hertford Tourist Office. It can also be found on-line at <https://southherts.camra.org.uk/campaigning/local-pub-guides/>.

# 50P OFF A PINT



*The Boot, Market Place*





*Dylans at the Kings Arms, George St*



# OF BEER

## **DYLANS AT THE KINGS ARMS**

*50p off a pint of real ale or craft beer wall  
for CAMRA members (25p off a half pint).  
Find us on George Street, St Albans.*

## **THE BOOT**

*50p off a pint of real ale (25p off a half pint).  
Find us opposite the clock tower  
in the Market place, St Albans.*

# Historic Hertfordshire

## The Inns & Alehouses of Victorian St Albans

From 28 November until 15 March, the St Albans Museum + Gallery will be hosting an exhibition on the Inns and Alehouses of Victorian St Albans. At the start of the century, there were perhaps 50 establishments serving the town, while by the century's end the number had nearly doubled to almost 100, although most of these establishments were smaller in size.

The exhibition explores the changing circumstances faced by inns and alehouses over a century that saw a transformation in the town's fortunes. Economic, legal, and cultural shifts forced establishments to adapt to an ever-changing market. The arrival of the railway and the decline of the coaching trade, together with growing national legislation on beer and spirits and the rise of the temperance movement, all had a profound impact on the town's pubs.

That there are still, roughly, the same number of pubs as there were inns and alehouses some 200 years ago is a testament to the

success of many of the town's landlords and brewers in adjusting to these changing times.

The exhibition includes objects related to the trade, and features a wall map of those 89 pubs (and three off-licences) operating in the town in the 1880s that featured in a song of the time, with accompanying photographs – a chance for long-time CAMRA members to see how many they recognise – as well as finding out what has become of them since the Victorian period.

Below are descriptions of three pubs that faced differing fates. Can you name them? Answers and photos in *Hertfordshire Pints of View Spring 2026 Edition*.

**David Thorold**

*Curator of Collections  
(Pre-Historic to Medieval)  
St Albans Museum*

### St Albans Historic Pubs Competition

#### The \*\*\*\*\*, London Road

No doubt one of the beer houses that opened in the nineteenth century during a liberalisation of the drinking laws designed to reduce overindulgence on gin and other spirits. The pub closed in 1914 but had a second life as a café until at least the late 1950s.

#### The \*\*\*\*\*, George Street

One of very few pubs to operate on this street, it was part of the Adey & White chain.

#### The \*\*\*\*\*, Verulam Road

Located on the junction with Lower Dagnall Street, the pub was active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### The Inns & Alehouses of Victorian St Albans

**28 Nov – 15 Mar**

St Albans Museum + Gallery  
Town Hall, St Peter's Street  
St Albans, AL1 3DH

**FREE ENTRY**

<https://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/inns-and-alehouses-victorian-st-albans>



# Pints of View 315 St Albans Historic Pubs Competition

**TWO winners each receive: 2026 CAMRA Good Beer Guide**

## Name the THREE pubs

London Road .....

George Street .....

Verulam Road .....

**Entries by Fri 30 Jan 2026 to:**  
PoV Competition, 5 Manor Way,  
Potters Bar, Herts. EN6 1EL

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Postcode.....Tel no.....

## Pints of View 314 Number of Herts Pubs Competition

Congratulations to our four winners who were closest to counting or guessing 134 pubs.

**Gino Conti**, Barnet

**Ann Moore**, St Albans

**Brian Penn**, Ware

**M Smith**, Halesowen



# THE MERMMAID St Albans



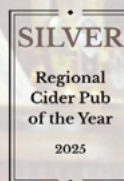
A multi-CAMRA award-winning free house, serving one of the finest selections of real ales and traditional ciders in Hertfordshire.

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 @mermaidstalbans • Instagram The Mermaid, St Albans • Facebook



**Opening Hours**  
 Mon-Thurs: 3pm - 11pm  
 Fri & Sat: 12pm - 12am  
 Sun: 12pm - 10:30pm



# Regional CAMRA Festivals

## 28<sup>th</sup> St Albans Beer & Cider Festival report

This year's festival celebrated women's hosiery manufacturer Ballito Hosiery Mill, established in St Albans district of Fleetville 100 years ago. The link is referenced in the 2025 festival logo, which features a woman wearing a pair of stockings while brandishing a beer glass. The logo has sparked mass debate and divided opinion - whilst many love the logo, some detest it.

The festival itself featured eight brewery bars, namely: **Mad Squirrel, Oakham, Ossett, Siren, Timothy Taylor's, Tring, Triple fff** and **Wantsum**, the usual Herts and UK beer bars, an international bottle selection, 20 keg beers, its resident cider & perry bar, and a regional spotlight bar - on this occasion focusing on Tyneside.



With vouchers in pocket and glass in hand, I entered the crowded main hall. I first went to the Tring bar, where I chose *Squadron Scramble 4%*, a session bitter that is the brewery's autumn seasonal release, produced in commemoration of the Battle of Britain. Hoppy on the nose, there's a distinct maltiness and bitter quality on the palate, followed by notes of caramel and grassiness in the background, while the mouthfeel was smooth yet dry on the backend; despite its relatively low strength, it was fairly potent in flavour.

Hankering after some dark ale, I headed to the Oakham bar to sample some *Kingdom 5%*, their resident stout. Developed in the dry Irish style, it was smooth and creamy, with a rounded bitterness coming from the roasted malt, followed by hints of berry fruit and a pleasant warmth that commands the tastebuds with every sip.

By this time, the Tyneside bar was running out of beers, so, in haste, I ordered up a third of *Jakehead 6.3%* from Wylam brewery, a massively hopped NEIPA brewed with an arsenal of US hops (including Citra, Centennial, Chinook T90, Simcoe T90 and Citra T90) which helped give its distinct and complex flavour profile. Understandably, the aroma was citrusy and distinctly hoppy, while the flavours were a torrent of tropical fruits underscored with a caramelised maltiness that dovetailed with the other flavours. This beer is usually released only in cans, which made this rare-cask release all the more special.

Sticking with rare ales, since it was **Chiltern Brewery's** 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I sampled some *Original Gravity 6%*, a re-creation of their very first brew from 1980. Essentially a strong ale, golden chestnut in colour, it was distinctly sweet with notes of toffee, spices, oak, plums, sherry and a background of hoppy bitterness acting as a counterpoint. While it had a complex bed of flavours, it was a bit on the weak side for a beer of this style, though remarkably similar to their *Bodger's Barley Wine 8.4%* – one could easily trace the trail of development between these two beers.

With time ticking by, and the vouchers running low, for my last brew of the evening, I headed local to try some *Old London Porter 5%*, an autumn seasonal release by **Bowtie**, the Watford-based nano-brewery. Developed in the style of early Victorian porters, the flavour profile is complex with a roster of coffee, dark chocolate, charcoal and biscuity notes. While the mouthfeel was a bit on the thin side, this allowed the potent roasted malt flavours to shine, making it a perfect re-creation of the classic porters of old. This beer was a rousing



finale to an enjoyable and memorable evening of fine brews from different parts of the country.

The St Albans Beer Festival never fails to impress with its ingenuity and assortment of fare – where visitors are well catered for and guaranteed a memorable time!

**Mike Goldwater**, *Enfield & Barnet CAMRA* (words)  
**Will Lewis**, *South Herts CAMRA* (photos)



## Herts Beer of the Year 2025

### Cask:

1	Tring Side Pocket for a Toad 3.6%
2	Two Bob Porter 4.2%
3	New River Blind Poet 4.5%

### Keg:

1	Crossover Blendery Persia 2023 6.9%
2	Baron Fuzz 4.5%
3	Six Hills Pining for the Fjords 5.2%

## St Albans Beer & Cider Festival 2025

Ballito leisurewear



T

### 2025 T-shirts

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 S/L/XL/XXL (no M)  
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### 2024 Polo Shirts

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Email your enquiry to:  
[distribution@pintsofview.camra.org.uk](mailto:distribution@pintsofview.camra.org.uk)

## Polo



# 29th Watford Beer Festival report

The 29th Watford Beer Festival took place from Thursday 21 to Saturday 23 August 2025 at Halsey Masonic Hall in Watford. Over the three days, thirsty customers were treated to 40 ales, plus real ciders and perry, most of which were sourced from small producers and microbreweries.

The organising team had used a wider range of beer suppliers last year and continued to do so this year, with ales delivered direct from breweries like **Phipps** of Northampton, **Nene Valley** of Peterborough and **Wantsum** of Kent, the latter of which was also able to supply beers from some smaller breweries like **White Rose** and **Little Avon**. The festival continued to use Bucks-based wholesalers Dayla and Best Cask for many of the beers and of course also stocked beers brewed by local favourites **Tring**, **New River** and **XT**. The organisers were hoping Watford-based breweries would be able to supply cask beers this year, but unfortunately it was not to be. Recently, **Pope's Yard Brewery** emerged from a long period of quiescence and brewed the Abbey Flyer beer in collaboration with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in honour of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership and in support of the protection of peregrines. It arrived too late for the Watford Beer Festival, but it was available in cask and bottle at the St Albans Beer Festival, and we hope it presages a new age of production from this much missed brewery. There has also been some recent activity from the nano-scale **Bowtie Brewers**, who brewed Old London Porter for the St Andrew's Church Fete in September.

Despite the festival taking place in summer, there are always calls for more dark beers from customers. Therefore, the organisers purposefully sourced a larger supply of dark beers this year, with 30% of the beers available being stouts, porters, dark milds or black IPAs. The range of ales and styles available was commented upon positively by festivalgoers, so using more unusual suppliers and buying more dark beers seems to have been a popular move.



Photo: © Matt Turmaine

*Andrew Vaughan (Watford & District CAMRA Chair) and Matt Turmaine (Watford MP)*

Also popular was the food, which once again was laid on by the Hall. Last year the catering received enthusiastic approval from customers. This year, pies were added to the menu, which were handmade to order by the chef. Unsurprisingly, these were a big hit according to comments left by festivalgoers on our feedback forms.

The feedback forms also had space for customers to vote for their favourite beers, ciders or perries. The scores were used to compile a list of the beers of the festival. This year the list was as follows:

1	Tiny Rebel – Oat of this World
2	Nene Valley – Bible Black Porter
3=	Nene Valley – Release the Chimps
3=	New River – Twin Spring
5=	Nene Valley – Egyptian Cream
5=	Skinnors – Betty Stogs
7	Elusive – Oregon Trail
8	Riverhead – Golden Hour
9=	Oakham – Sun City
9=	Tring – Tea Kettle Stout

So, congratulations to Tiny Rebel Brewery and thanks to all the volunteers and customers who made the festival such a success.

**Andrew Vaughan**  
Chair  
Watford & District CAMRA

# Herts Pub, Club, Church & Brewery Festivals



## 3 Brewers x FREE = 9 Beer & Music Festivals

The 9th, and biggest, 'edition' of the 3 Brewers (FREE ENTRY) Beer & Music Festival was hosted at their Symonshyde Farm Brewery on Saturday 30 August.

After a long, hot summer, the British weather opted to play dirty, with cloud, wind and rain - it could almost have been a Bank Holiday! However, neither the spirit nor, more importantly, the thirst of the festival attendees was dampened by the wet!

The brewery's full cask range was available - *Special 4.8%, IPA 4.6%, Blonde 4.2%, Classic*

*4.0%, Copper 3.9% and Golden 3.8%*, along with kegs of IPA and Blonde. The food options covered many bases, with the welcome return of Two Two's burgers, Brewers Pork Company hog roast (the pigs being fed on spent 3 Brewers grains) and the added attraction of Limeface Malaysian cuisine.

Possibly the most extensive, and varied, music line-up ever seen at the festival, kept the mood alive throughout the day, with nine acts on the two stages, showcasing a mix of acoustic, vocal and full rock/pop bands. These included several local favourites such as The Zipheads, Pat & the Butchers, Mouth on a Stick, MacLaren Wall, as well as the Fleetville Swing Band. All were well received.

Despite the weather, Mark & Matt were encouraged by the attendance holding up, with family groups starting early to dodge the showers, and committed festival goers being dressed & equipped to meet conditions head-on, turning up for the evening sessions - all were later warmed up by the now famous 3B fire pit!

At the close, only a few pints of beer were left in the last two casks, which is as it should be!

So congratulations, well done to all, and see you again next year.

**Stephen Thompson**  
3 Brewers Liaison Officer  
South Herts CAMRA



*3 Brewers and a warm welcome*

## West Coast flows from New River

New River Brewery is now celebrating its tenth anniversary! On 5 October the brewery's small team hosted a gathering of friends, colleagues and local supporters from CAMRA. The event raised over £400 for Cancer Research UK, and also provided the perfect platform for the launch of a special anniversary beer, the generously dry-hopped *Ten of Herts West Coast IPA 4.8%*, now available in cask.

**Tim Vaughan**

*New River Brewery Liaison Officer (BLO)  
Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA*



## Oakman Inns are out

In July, Berkhamsted-based pub company, Oakman Inns, went into administration with a loss of 159 jobs – the company owned 20 pubs. Fourteen of them have been taken over by Upham Inns of which four are in Hertfordshire – the **Beech House** (St Albans), **Red Lion** (Water End) and the **Kings Arms** and **Penny Farthing**, both in Berkhamsted.

Six pubs were immediately closed including two in Hertfordshire, the **Beech House** (Watford) and **Grand Junction Arms** (Tring) and we await news of their future.

Oakmans were also involved in another pub scheme for a shop conversion in Harpenden, which presumably will now not go ahead, and in hotel projects in Mill Green, near Hatfield, and Batchworth, where owners will, we imagine, now need to seek new trading partners.

Administrators have said *“The hospitality sector continues to face significant and persistent challenges, including a reduction in customer numbers, which has been driven by changing consumer habits and broader economic pressures. In addition, operators are contending with rising operating costs,*

*such as increased energy prices, higher food and beverage costs and wage inflation.”*

**Les Middlewood**

*Joint Pub Protection Officer  
South Herts CAMRA*

**NEW RIVER**  
EST. 2015  
**BREWERY**

**AWARD-WINNING  
BEER FROM  
THE RIVERBANK**

**[newriverbrewery.co.uk](http://newriverbrewery.co.uk)**

# WHAT'S THE STORY?

## LOCAL BARNs RESTORED TO GLORY!

*Tring Brewery & Tap Room, Dunsley Farm, London Road, Tring, HP23 6HA*

### Rustic Bar, 14 Beer Taps, Vintage Bus

The Piggeries Taproom & Courtyard has opened at Tring Brewery, sporting rustic barns and a double-decker bus, where punters can raise glasses on a top-deck that offers views over Dunsley Farm and beyond.

The Piggeries is the result of the brewery's efforts to restore a rustic barn-space on the farm and features reclaimed pub furniture, vintage signs and mirrors, and newly laid Welsh-slate flooring. In the courtyard sits *Olive*, a 1980s double-decker bus that has been retrofitted to serve beer, cider, wine and a full backbar of spirits.

As Tring Brewery's official tap, 14 fresh beers - most direct from the tanks - will be pouring

year-round. In addition, there are plans for small-batch ales to feature, with many exclusive to The Piggeries, giving on-site drinkers an even great choice!

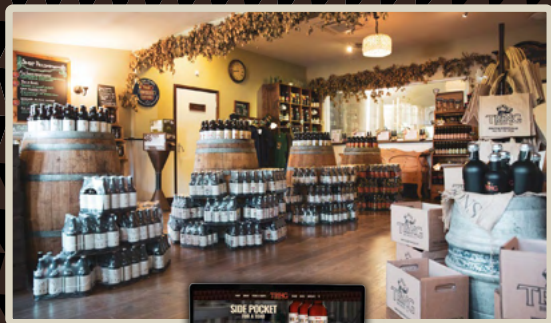
Along with the drinks are gourmet snacks and street food, including runny-yolk scotch eggs from Hertfordshire's A Good Egg Co, and crisps, nuts and scratchings from Chesham-based produces, Salty Dog.

The Piggeries welcomes families and well-behaved dogs. Opening times: Thu (17:00-21:00), Fri & Sat (12:00-21:00).

**Jared Ward-Brickett**

*Tring Brewery PR Director  
Mid-Chilterns CAMRA*

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In 2025 our Monthly Specials are raising funds and awareness for The Repair Shed



**TRING**  
BREWERY Co.

Dunsley Farm, London Road, Tring HP23 6HA

☎ 01442 890721 🌐 www.tringbrewery.co.uk





I always walk him here  
for a pint of his  
favourite...

*Time for that taste of Taylor's*



## French-Eyes Model

Hi Joe

There's been a lot in the press recently about the increasing number of new Wetherspoon pubs opening under the franchise model.

What are the reasons for going down this route, and what are the main differences compared with the traditional setup — both from a staff and a customer perspective?

Back in June, I was on the Isle of Man and visited the newly opened Conister Arms — my lasting impression was the absence of real ale!

I'm hoping this doesn't typify, or worse still define, your franchised pubs.

Cheers!

Paul



*Hi Paul*

*The aim would be that a franchised pub is the same in essentially every way, to a customer.*

*The student union franchises do have a few small differences as they are still a student union pub.*

*I'd certainly expect real ale to be on sale in the Conister Arms for next year's Isle of Man TT.*

*Joe Argyle*

*Senior Commercial Manager - Franchising*

## Wot, no gut?

'Spoons continues to serve up regular Real Ale festivals that always include a range of guest ales brewed in the UK by foreign brewers.

Of those I tried at the early October Festival, my favourites were both from USA brewers; *Alesmith IPA 6.0%*, brewed by Oakham; and *Creature Comforts Automatic 5.0%*, brewed by Adnams.

However, I got almost as much pleasure from the interestingly named *Effingut Golden Ale 4.3%* - an Indian beer, brewed by Hook Norton.

Being served at the Admiral Byng in Potters Bar by 'Real-Ale Champion' Adam, I couldn't resist the photo opportunity. And while Adam's face might resemble Mr Hoppy on the pump clip, bodily he's tall and slim - certainly no Effingut!

**Paul Donatantonio**



# Herts Brewery A-Z

## 3 Brewers of St. Albans

Symondshyde Farm, nr Hatfield AL10 9BB  
[www.3brewers.co.uk](http://www.3brewers.co.uk)



Tap room, mezzanine and outside marquees/gazebos are available for weddings and parties. One private event in the summer hosted 250+ attendees.

*Ballito Blonde 4.2%*, specially brewed for St Albans Beer & Cider Festival was very well received and taken on by 8 pubs in the St Albans area. Gone by end of October!

Head Brewer Matt Sutton confirmed the popular seasonal *Porter 5.2%* had been brewed and would be released to pubs before end of November. 3B Beer & Music festival report on p39.

**Stephen Thompson, BLO**

## Baron Brewing

Great Hormead, Buntingford SG9 0PB  
[www.baronbrewing.co.uk](http://www.baronbrewing.co.uk)



The brewery has continued to release new beers throughout the last few months including *Lion Tamer Imperial Stout 10%*, *Zip Off Trousers Double IPA 8%* and *On Wednesdays Lager 5.2%*. Work continues on their new Cambridge bar 'The Handsome Prince' - more news next addition.

**Simon Dewhurst, BLO**

## Buntingford Brewery

Therfield Rd, Royston SG8 9NW  
[www.buntingfordbrewery.com](http://www.buntingfordbrewery.com)



*Tis But A Scratch Old Ale 6.5%*, winner at Cambridge Beer Festival, will be available in December in both cask and bottle. Along side their core range, *Silent Night Golden Winter Ale 4.1%*, *Royston Red 4.8%* and *Single Hop Columbus 4.0%* are available now.

Buntingford are at a number of pre-Christmas events including Brent Pelham, Great Hormead and Stotfold.

**John Hamblin, BLO**

## Creative Juices Brewing

Woodoaks Farm, Rickmansworth WD3 9XQ  
[www.creativejuicesbrewingcompany.com](http://www.creativejuicesbrewingcompany.com)



The brewery has started producing taproom specials, the most recent being *What About Elephants Hazy Pale 5.8%* brewed by Henry Winter on the same kit from his days at Lock 81. Creative Juices now uses his old kit as a pilot plant for experimental brews.

Foodie Friday events have finished for the year, but there will still be live music two Fridays a month and a quiz on the 2nd Thursday of the month. The brewery plans to have stalls at Christmas markets throughout December.

**Andrew Vaughan, BLO**

## Garden City Brewery

22 The Wynd, Letchworth Garden City SG6 3EN  
[www.gardencitybrewery.co.uk](http://www.gardencitybrewery.co.uk)



Recently brewed their annual *HopSpice Golden Ale 4.2%* with warming winter spice, as a fundraiser for the Garden House Hospice.

Their usual stable of seasonal specials will include *Star of Wonder Pale c.4.0%* and *Julebryg c.5.3%*, the brewery's take on a traditional Danish festive beer.

**John Hamblin, BLO**

## Mad Squirrel Brewery

Berkhamsted Rd, Hemel Hempstead HP1 2SG  
[www.madsquirrelbrew.co.uk](http://www.madsquirrelbrew.co.uk)



*Winters Tail 4.5%* seasonal dark bitter in cask coming back. Also, two new keg beers, *Amberillo 4.5%* amber ale and a pastry stout *Viannese Swirl 8%*. *Fog Off 6%* IPA has just launched into Waitrose and will soon be in Tesco.

Draught *Budvar* now in all taprooms.

**Richard Abraham, BLO**

## McMullen Brewing & Pubs

26 Old Cross, Hertford, SG14 1RD  
[www.mcmullens.co.uk](http://www.mcmullens.co.uk)



McMullen has purchased Stoke Mill, a 19thC former corn mill on the River Wey in Guildford. Mac's winter brew is the familiar *Boot Warmer* 5.2%. Mad Squirrel canned beers are now available in some Mac's Hertfordshire pubs including the **Dog's Head**, Bishop's Stortford, the **Coopers Arms**, Hitchin and the **Woolpack**, Hertford, the last of which has been refurbished, along with the **Practitioner**, Hertford.

**Les Middlewood, BLO**

## New River Brewery

Pindar Rd, Hoddesdon EN11 0FF  
[www.newriverbrewery.co.uk](http://www.newriverbrewery.co.uk)



The brewery has launched a new American Style IPA, *Ten of Herts* 4.8%, which is now being supplied in cask to pubs. *Blind Poet* 4.5%, the popular, lightly smoked porter, continues to impress, winning Herts Cask Beer of the Year 2025 Bronze at St Albans Beer Festival.

**Tim Vaughan, BLO**

## Six Hills Brewing

29b High St, Stevenage SG1 3BG  
[www.sixhillsbrewing.co.uk](http://www.sixhillsbrewing.co.uk)



Big news is the racking of beer into FreeKegs – containers that allow secondary conditioning and are reusable, but have a much longer shelf-life than traditional cask. Read all about in Brewer's View on p16.

**Adam Walsh, BLO**

## Tring Brewery

Dunsley Farm, London Rd, Tring HP23 6HA  
[www.tringbrewery.co.uk](http://www.tringbrewery.co.uk) Tel: 01442 890721



The brewery is continuing its support of local charities into 2026. As usual, the names and images of monthly beers will draw inspiration from Tring's annual 'Charity of

Choice' – to be announced in a special new-year press release. Look out for a great link up!

**Jared Ward-Brickett,**  
**Brewery PR Director**

## Two Bob Brewing

[www.facebook.com/p/The-Two-Bob-Brewing-Company-100031566857163/](https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Two-Bob-Brewing-Company-100031566857163/)  
[twobobbrewco@gmail.com](mailto:twobobbrewco@gmail.com)



*Porter* 4.2% was judged joint runner-up in the cask category at this year's Hertfordshire Beer of the Year competition, held at St Albans Beer & Cider Festival.

The brewery also has a new ale – *Cratchit Winter Warmer* 6.0% – available now.

**John Hamblin, BLO**

## Other Hertfordshire breweries



### The Belgian Brewer

Raynham Road, Bishop's Stortford  
 CM23 5NZ  
[www.thebelgianbrewer.co.uk](http://www.thebelgianbrewer.co.uk)



### Crossover Blendery

Lannock Manor Farm, Weston  
 SG4 7EE  
[www.crossoverblendery.co.uk](http://www.crossoverblendery.co.uk)



### Farr Brew

Great Level End Farm, Redbourn  
 AL3 7A  
[www.farrbrew.com](http://www.farrbrew.com)



### Pope's Yard Brewery

Paramount Ind. Est. Watford  
 WD24 7ACX  
[www.popesyard.co.uk](http://www.popesyard.co.uk)

# Down Your Way

## Hertfordshire Pubs & Clubs

Changes since  
the last edition

This section contains information from a large number of sources and occasionally errors may occur or the information may be out-of-date upon publication. Comments or additional information should be sent to the editor (see p3 for contact details).

**ASTON END** The busy **Crown** remains up for sale but now has a new extensive food menu including pizzas, live music on Fridays and continues with its popular fortnightly Sunday quiz.

**BAYFORD** A planning application has been submitted for the closed **Baker Arms** (McMullen) which would see part of the existing building retained as a pub and the rest converted for residential use. A new house would also be built in part of the garden. A decision is expected imminently. If approved an opportunity might then arise for the community to acquire the pub, funded through a community share offer.

**BENINGTON** In September the owners of the closed **Bell** submitted a planning application for a Change of Use to residential use - we await the outcome. "*The Friends of the Bell*" are opposing this submission and continue with their attempts to find a way to see their village pub re-opened. The pub was awarded Asset of Community Value status in April - its moratorium

period of 6 months expired in early October. In June the Planning Inspectorate dismissed an appeal by the owners against an East Herts District Council enforcement notice that cited the creeping change of the property to residential use, without planning permission.

**BOREHAMWOOD** The **Wellington** in Theobald Street relaunched in late July with a new menu and cask beers which have included Wainwright Gold.

**BRAUGHING** Welcome news. The **Brown Bear**, closed since March, has reopened now in the hands of Jeff and Jo Webster and son Jamie. Jeff has recently relinquished his lease, after 17 years, at the **Star** in Standon. Opening from noon, traditional pub fayre meals, all home made, are now available with Christmas meals on the way. There are three cask ales which to date have included Harvey's Sussex Bitter, Woodforde's Wherry, Tring's Side Pocket for a Toad and Crouch Vale's Brewer's Gold but being a Free House, Jeff is yet to settle on his beers, always aiming to have a golden

beer and a traditional bitter on the pumps, together with a guest ale.

**CHESHUNT** Welcome to Bogdan Huyca, new manager at the **Maltsters**, in Windmill Lane. He has Mac's AK Original and County Bitter on handpump and is considering taking on a third Mac's beer.

**CHISWELL GREEN** The **Three Hammers** reopened on 14 August after a full refurbishment. Early beers have included Timothy Taylor Landlord, Dark Star Hophead, Fuller's London Pride and Adnams' Ghost Ship.

**CHORLEYWOOD** The **Old Shepherd** at Chorleywood Bottom has changed hands and is now being run by Natalie and Max Walker, who have initiated a range of new activities, including live music, quizzes and Sunday roast.

**CROXLEY GREEN** The "**Save Our Sportsman**" campaign group continues to monitor developments at the Scots Hill pub, still closed and on the market but now at a reduced price - still a sizeable £975,000. Reports are that



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much maintenance and improvement is necessary.

**DANE END** No firm news on the **Boot** which was sold at auction in May. Local talk is that the new owners are considering the pub's future as a children's nursery which would need a planning Change of Use.

**EASTWICK** The **Lion** remains closed - its future in the village perhaps linked to the wider north of Harlow housing expansion proposals.

**ELSTREE** It looks like work is finally underway for the £1m refurbishment of the **Plough**, once Alfred Hitchcock's favourite local. Accordingly there are plans for an outdoor cinema

together with a large play area and outside bar. No details yet on a completion programme - we'll report more in our next edition.

**FLAMSTEAD END** Closed for many months, the **Freemasons** reopened in September - we await more details.

**GRAVELEY** The **George and Dragon** closed in June with Greene King now seeking new leaseholders.

**GREAT HORMEAD** After many, many, months of closure the **Three Tuns** reopened in late September, bringing this thatched pub back to life - very good news for the local community. Tastefully refurbished and furnished, opening hours are

being trialed as from noon every day. Early cask ales have included Timothy Taylor Landlord and Boltmaker alongside Greene King IPA. There's pool, darts and a community-focussed range of events together with TV sport. As we went to press the kitchen was being prepared for future hot meals. Open all day from noon.

**HARPENDEN** The High Street **Wheatsheaf** is the subject of a Change of Use planning application which, if successful, will see it operating as an eatery. The **Inn on the Green** in Leyton Road closed in September for a month of refurbishment work and was due to reopen at the end of October.

**HAULTWICK** Closed for well over ten years and looking increasingly forlorn, is there new hope for the **Rest and Welcome**? A fresh planning permission was submitted in June to East Herts District Council for some demolition and construction work, whilst keeping the core of the Listed building in tact - all to the view of an eventual reopening of the pub. There has been a huge swathe of local support for the application. The whole surrounding area has been denuded of pubs within living memory with Levens Green, Dane End, Sacombe, Whempstead, Wood End, Goose Green, Colliers End, Great Munden and Old Hall Green all now publess. Time for a rural pub revival!

**HERONSGATE** The lease for the **Stag** in Long Lane is now currently available through McMullen.

**HERTFORD** Plenty of pub news from the town for this edition. **Mad Squirrel** brewery are opening their 10<sup>th</sup> **Taproom** in the former **Snug** building in Railway Street. Two cask ales will feature alongside their extensive selection of craft keg beers. For the brewery this marks a return to where it all started - Red Squirrel started brewing in Hertford in 2004 later moving to Potten End near Hemel Hempstead and changing their name to Mad Squirrel. There will be pizzas, cocktails and occasional music to attract a wide audience and an outside decked area is to be created

at the rear. As we go to press opening is anticipated for late November or early December but fitting-out work is already well under way. The **Quiet Man** (with three cask ales) and the connecting **Hertford House Hotel** (no cask ale) in Fore Street both have been sold to the owners of **Tewinbury Farm** wedding and events organisation, based just a few miles away. The **Quiet Man** has been redecorated and renamed the **Cow and Stout**, a nod to the reputation the pub has gained for its Guinness. The new owners say "the pub will continue as an independent pub, rooted in the community". Dark Star Hophead and St Austell Tribute will feature along with a guest ale. A new pub venture called the **Other Side** has opened opposite on Parliament Square in a former pizza restaurant. Run by Matt Shipton the former owner of the **Quiet Man**, fitting-out is underway and a full completion is expected later in the autumn when three handpumped cask ales will be available. In the meantime there are often pins of cask ale on the bar with beer served direct from them. The **Old Cross Tavern** has been awarded entry into Timothy Taylor's Champion Club - an honour only given to those pubs consistently selling TT beers in top condition. Alongside are six or so ever-changing cask ales. All micro-brewing equipment at the pub has now been removed, thus finally ending the brewing chapter in the pub's history.

In a great commitment to cask ale, a brand new bank of handpumps has been installed at the **Hertford Club** in Bull Plain. Two cask beers are always available (sometimes three) with choices mainly from local and regional breweries. Memberships are available. The **Black Horse** in West Street is keenly looking for new rugby players to join their stretched RFU-affiliated team - if you are interested please contact the pub for further information. There are six ever-changing beers at the bar and there's a new wine list. Sunday roasts are back on the menu as is the excellent game pie. McMullen have completed a full and comfortable refurbishment of the **Practitioner** in Fore Street but sadly there is no cask ale. No cask ale too at the **White Hart** in Salisbury Square where Mac's have removed the handpumps. They have also recently completed a refurbishment at their 'brewery tap', the **Woolpack** on Millbridge where a full range of Mac's cask ales is in place. Up on Bengo Street the **Greyhound** has temporarily closed following the departure of the tenants. The pub was Mac's first pub purchase way back in 1836. New tenants are being sought by the company. **Harleys Lounge** is due to open in the Lea Wharf riverside development in the town centre. No real ale.

**HITCHIN** The **Cock** in the High Street has reopened after six years of being

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known as Cinnabar – now specialising in high quality food with a restaurant at the rear. The front bar is once again open for drinkers with usually two handpumped beers on offer, 3 Brewers Blonde often appearing. The pub is closed Monday and Tuesday then open Wednesday from 4pm and from noon Thursdays to Sunday. In The Arcade **Hamm** reopened after a long period of closure but now with no real ale.

**HODDESDON** The **Bell Hotel** is no longer a pub - now trading as a Hotel and WWII-themed Tea Room with no cask ale. The **King William IV**, in Lord Street remains closed and still awaits a planning decision by Broxbourne Borough Council

on a submission to convert the pub into three dwellings.

**KIMPTON** The march goes on to find a way for the **White Horse** to be reopened – a further pop-up took place in the nearby Dacre Rooms in September. Also in September the pub's Asset of Community Value status was renewed by North Herts Council taking it to an expiry date in 2030.

**LEMSFORD** It's a final goodbye to the **Long Arm and Short Arm**, demolished in September by Griggs developers who are to replace it with housing.

**LETCHWORTH** The **Two Chimneys**, a Greene King Hungry Horse pub, is set to close in November

and reopen as Hickory's Smokehouse restaurant in 2026. Presumably a planning Change of Use might be required.

**MILL GREEN** Disappointingly plans to reopen the **Green Man**, shut since 2011, seemed to have ground to a halt. However from a chance discussion with the Marquess of Salisbury we have learned that plans are still moving along and that it is hoped that the pub will reopen by Christmas or shortly after. We heard something similar, last year. Plans to reopen the nearby **Bush Hall Hotel** are needing a rethink, following the failure of the Salisbury Estate's partner Oakman Inns who are now in administration.

**NEWGATE STREET** A change of leaseholders at the **Crown** with Greene King IPA on the handpumps along with a guest ale. There's Fish and Chips Friday, roasts on Sundays and look out for the monthly Thursday quiz. Along the road, the historic **Coach and Horses** has been converted to a Turkish gastro pub, with draught Guinness and John Smith's - but no real ale. Such a disappointing loss.

**NORTHAW** Incoming landlord Tom Arnold and Head Chef Paul Cooke are now in charge at the **Two Brewers** - it reopened in early August after refurbishment. Tom and Paul also have the food-led Burleigh Arms in Cambridge. Offering a high-class menu there are themed food evenings, Sunday roasts and a monthly quiz. A Brewpoint pub, we await reports of cask ales but Brewpoint Anchorman and Timothy Taylor Landlord were spotted on the bar when the pub reopened. Closed Mondays. Open from 4pm Tuesdays, otherwise open all day from noon. Check pub website for food times.

**OAKLANDS** Without knowledge of the community, the **North Star**, the village's only pub, was sold and closed by McMullen earlier this year. New owners Griggs Developers then immediately applied for planning permission for a Change of Use to a children's nursery. Over 100 objections were received many bemoaning the loss

of the pub. Nevertheless, in September, Welwyn Hatfield District Council took the decision to award permission. What a sad chain of events for the village which is now 'dry'. Yet another publess community, yet another loss.

**PERRY GREEN** Work is underway to bring the **Hoops** back to life. Closed for three years, building and refurbishment work aims to extend and improve the pub which sits on the Henry Moore estate. Current plans are for a reopening in early 2026.

**PETER'S GREEN** The **Bright Star** has been put up for sale at £800,000 for either residential or commercial use causing concern amongst local people who have signed a petition for the pub to be saved. They urge the Parish Council to seek Asset of Community Value status for the pub. The owner has cited sustained lack of custom as a reason for the decision to sell.

**POTTERS CROUCH** Fuller's continues to advertise for new leaseholders at the **Holly Bush** - now closed for over 9 months. A spokesperson for the company told us: "We are really keen to get the pub reopened, but we absolutely must find the right Tenant for this amazing site. We are close to an agreement - but we aren't in a position to update further at the current time. As soon as we can, we will let the local community know about a reopening timeline."

**PUCKERIDGE** Great to see the **White Hart** (McMullen), High Street, reopen. With loads of activities planned. Mac's cask ales are at the bar. New leaseholders John and Kelly are also in charge at the **Rose and Crown** and **Brewery Tap**, both in Ware.

**RICKMANSWORTH** The **Fox and Hounds** in the High Street reopened in June after refurbishment and with new management.

**ROYSTON** Planning permission has been awarded for the construction of nine flats on land at the rear of **Banyers Hotel** in Melbourn Street.

**RUSHDEN** The **Moon and Stars** has remained closed for many, many months with little or no news. *Pints of View* would welcome any information on the future for the pub.

**ST ALBANS** After a summer where it was discontinued for lack of sales, cask ale is back at the **Blacksmiths** - recently Oakham JHB and Ringwood Razorback were sampled. The **Victoria** in Victoria Street closed in July reopening as a Sports pub with new licensees in late October. The **Beech House** in St Peter Street has been taken over by Upham Inns. Currently no cask ale, but we are told that Tring Side Pocket will be introduced later in November. Steps are being taken by Young's for the closed former **Albans Well** St Peter's Street pub which is likely to be



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reassigned for retail use. As part of the construction work leading up to the reopening of the **Rose and Crown** in St Michael's, an archaeological dig took place in the summer - no news yet on a potential reopening date.

**ST PAUL'S WALDEN** At the **Strathmore Arms** the new leaseholders are Zowie and Marc, who are previously from the **Red Cow** in Harpenden. There has been an internal redecoration with some furniture changes and there were initially four real ales including Greene King IPA, a further beer from the GK stable plus Tring Side Pocket For A Toad and a changing guest ale. Open Tuesday to Sunday 2pm - 9pm. Look

out for 'Food Truck Friday' with a different truck each week - ranging from pizzas to fish and chips and even to Hungarian goulash.

### SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Great to see the **Gate** open again after a lengthy period of closure.

**STANDON** There's a change of leaseholder at the **Star** which reopened in late September after a brief closure. Longstanding landlord, Jeff Webster has left, to take over at the **Brown Bear** in Braughing. Incoming are Jim and Helen Hemmings who also run the **Bell**, just up the road. Cask ales are Greene King IPA and Abbot alongside Crouch Vale's Brewers Gold. Opening each day at noon,

the food menu features traditional country meals and pub classics, food sourced locally - meals from 12-4pm and 6-8.30pm Mon-Thu; all day till 8.30pm Fri-Sat and 12-5pm Sunday.

**STANSTEAD ABBOTTS** A mention for the riverside **Stanstead Abbots and St Margaret's Village Club**, off the High Street, which is offering cask ale. Recent beers have been from Theakston's, Adnams, Wadworth's, Oakham and Timothy Taylor. For members and their guests there's plenty of weekend activity with live bands and open-mic on the first Friday of the month. Opens at 4pm weekdays and at noon at weekends. Club memberships are available.

**STEVENAGE** Congratulations to Jack and Hayley at the **Marquis of Granby** in the Old Town. They have won Greene King's Regional Franchise of the Year award for 2025 and also the Pub Partners Excellence Pub of the Year accolade for outstanding performance. The **Emperors Head** in Emperors Gate remains closed and is up for lease through Trust Inns.

**THORLEY** The **Coach and Horses** closed in October for refurbishment by McMullen – due to reopen in November.

**TONWELL** No news on the **Robin Hood and Little John** Free House which has remained closed since March.

**WARE** Sad to report that the recently reopened **Bell** has already discontinued cask ale. The **Maltings** in Watton Road is being advertised for new leaseholders. Longstanding landlord Chris Phillips (15 years) has retired at the **Old Bulls Head**. The Baldock Street pub, renowned for selling the heady Theakston Old Peculier cask ale, has entered a period of closure and we keenly wait to find out the future for one of Ware's most iconic pubs. The **Rifle Volunteer** in Collett Road is now back on the cask ale map, selling handpumped Greene King Abbot Ale.

**WATFORD** The **Horns** reopened again on 28 May. Under the new management it has resumed the regular live music nights for which it was previously popular. At the time of writing the **White Lion** is under temporary management while it awaits new lessees. Following Oakman Inns' insolvency in July the **Beech House** in the High Street closed, its future now being unclear.

**WELWYN** At the **Wellington**, on the High Street, sample the Old Cannon cask ales, brewed in Bury St Edmunds – always one on handpump, others sometimes direct from the cask. At the **White Hart** in Prospect Place, well-kept cask ale, often Fuller's London Pride or/and St Austell Tribute, features at the bar. The **Rose and Crown**, in Church Street, often has three cask ales on handpump, one being a guest ale - Shepherd Neame Red on a recent visit. The **White Horse** in Mill Lane

sometimes has three cask ales, with a regular beer from Purity brewery - a rarity in Herts. All four pubs offer an impressive food menu. The **Steamer** in London Road and the **Tavern** in the High Street both offer handpumped McMullen AK Original Mild plus one other Mac's cask ale.

**WEST HYDE** A new management team is due to be taking over the **Oaks**.

**WELWYN GARDEN CITY** Wells & Co appear to have major plans to refurbish and reopen the **Beehive** in Beehive Lane. No timescale given, but watch out for developments – it will be a welcome reacquaintance for this part of the city, the plans being described as creating a "traditional community pub".

**WORMLEY** The **Queens Head** has had a part internal refurbishment and is offering Hobgoblin Gold cask ale on handpump.

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CASK MARQUE  
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# South Herts Pub of the Year 2026

Since its inception in 1986, South Herts Pub of the Year has been won by 17 different pubs.

The branch area is divided into four regional zones, each with a similar number of pubs. A coordinator for each zone is appointed and a shortlist of pubs drawn-up from those nominated by Branch Members:

<p><b>North West zone</b> – Matt Handford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cricketers, Redbourn</li><li>• Cross Keys, Harpenden</li><li>• Green Man, Sandridge</li><li>• Horse &amp; Groom, Hatfield</li><li>• John Bunyan, Coleman Green</li></ul>	<p><b>North East zone</b> – Brian Page</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Black Horse, Hertford</li><li>• Crooked Billet, Ware</li><li>• Great Eastern Tavern, Hertford</li><li>• Old Barge, Hertford</li><li>• Old Cross Tavern, Hertford</li><li>• White Horse, Hertford</li></ul>
<p><b>West zone</b> (St Albans) – Phil Defriez</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beehive</li><li>• Boot Inn</li><li>• Garibaldi</li><li>• Great Northern</li><li>• Lower Red Lion</li><li>• Mermaid</li><li>• Robin Hood</li><li>• White Hart Tap</li></ul>	<p><b>South zone</b> – Paul Donatantonio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admiral Byng, Potters Bar</li><li>• Black Boy, Bricket Wood</li><li>• Bull, London Colney</li><li>• Cask &amp; Stillage, Potters Bar</li><li>• Crooked Billet, Colney Heath</li><li>• Three Hammers, Chiswell Green</li><li>• Woodman, Wildhill</li></ul>

Members are encouraged to get involved! All it requires is going to **every pub in a zone**, drinking real ale and filling in a short form with scores out of 10. Go to <https://southherts.camra.org.uk/members/poty/> for full details, including PotY Procedure, Guidance and Judging Form.

The criteria to be judged are:

- Quality & Condition of Ale
- Promotion & Knowledge of Ale
- Cleanliness & Staff Hygiene
- Community Focus
- Service & Welcome
- Style, Décor & Atmosphere
- Sympathy with CAMRA's Aims
- Overall Impression & Value



## Remember

whilst judging pubs for the *Good Beer Guide* is only about the quality of the beer, judging for *Pub of the Year* includes seven other criteria.

Please note that for a member's scores to be included, **ALL the pubs in a zone** must be surveyed (and ideally more than once and at different times) and the scores sent to the zonal coordinators by **Thursday 15 January 2026**.

What a great reason to visit our pubs. Cheers to every member who gets involved!

**Phil Defriez**  
Pub of the Year Coordinator  
South Herts CAMRA

# Herts CAMRA

## Meetings, Socials & Festivals

The listings below are colour-coded **North Herts**, **South Herts**, **Herts & Essex Borders**, **Watford & District** and **All Hertfordshire Branches**. CAMRA members are very welcome to attend all CAMRA Branch Meetings and Social Events.

**Attention!** Keep up to date with all Hertfordshire Branch activities by visiting our websites and social media pages – details on p57

### DECEMBER

#### Wed 3: SH Branch Meeting – Hatfield

8pm. **Red Lion**. Great North Road, Hatfield.

#### Wed 3: HEB Branch Committee Meeting – Green Tye

8.30pm. **Prince of Wales**, Green Tye.

#### Sat 6: All Branches Herts Beer of the Year Award (Keg Category)

3pm. **Crossover Blendery Christmas Market Day**, The Blendery Barn, Lanark Manor Farm, Hitchin Road, Weston.

#### Sat 6: W&D Branch Social – Bedmond & Abbots Langley

1pm. **Bell**, 18 High St, Bedmond, WD5 OQR;  
2.15pm **Royal Oak**, Kitters Green, WD5 OET;  
3pm **Compasses**, 95 Tibbs Hill Road, WD5 OLJ.

#### Fri 12: NH Traditional Pre-Christmas Ale Trail – Hitchin

7.30pm. Meet at the **Radcliffe Arms**, Walsworth Road, from where we'll take in the **Victoria**, Ickleford Road, the **Teller Bar**, Bucklersbury, **BBs Bar** in Bridge Street and the **Half Moon**, Queen Street, or as we ramble. Christmas jumpers optional.

#### Fri 19: W&D Branch Social – Bushey

8.15pm. **Three Crowns**, 1 High Road, WD23 1EA; 9.15pm **King Stag**, 15 Bournehall Road, WD23 3EH; 10pm. **Swan**, 25 Park Road, WD23 3EE.

#### Sat 27: SH The Sopwell Sweep Social – St Albans

2pm. **Beehive**, St Albans - a trip around the pubs of the Sopwell area of the City. See p56.

### JANUARY

#### Date TBC: HEB Branch Meeting – Ongar

8pm. **Cock Tavern**, Ongar. A minibus will be running to this event but places must be prebooked for the bus. To book a place on the bus please contact Graham at MiniBus@heb.camra.org.uk

#### Thu 1: W&D The Get Away from the Family Social – Watford

1pm. **Nascot Arms**, 11 Stamford Road, Watford, WD17 4QS.

#### Mon 12: W&D Open Meeting – Watford

8pm. **West Herts Sports Club**, 8 Park Avenue, Watford, WD18 7HP.

#### Tue 13: SH NW Zone Good Beer Guide Selection Meeting – Harpenden

7pm. **Cross Keys**, High Street, Harpenden.

#### Wed 14: NH Branch Social – Stevenage Old Town

8pm. **Broken Seal**, High Street, then **Standing Order**, High Street, **Marquis of Lorne**, High Street and **Chequers**, High Street.

#### Thu 15: SH NE Zone Good Beer Guide Selection Meeting – Hertford

8pm. **Hertford Club**, Bull Plain, Hertford.

#### Fri 30: W&D 'Pre-Xmas' London Pub Crawl

6pm. Start at **Greyhound**, 1 Kensington Sq, W8 5EP.

#### Fri 23: W&D Branch Social – Oxhey

8.30pm. **Rifle Volunteer**, 36 Villiers Road, WD19 4AJ; 9.15pm **Villiers Arms**, 108 Villiers Road, WD19 4AJ; 10pm **Railway Arms**, 1 Aldenham Road, WD19 4AB.

#### Sat 24: SH West Zone Good Beer Guide

**Selection Meeting – St Albans**

1pm. **Royston Club**, College Road, St Albans.

**Sat 24: SH South Zone Good Beer Guide Selection Meeting – St Albans**

1.30pm. **Royston Club**, College Road, St Albans.

**Sat 24: SH Branch Meeting and AGM – St Albans**

2pm. **Royston Club**, College Road, St. Albans.

**FEBRUARY****Mon 9: HEB Branch Meeting and AGM**

Time and venue TBC

**Wed 11: NH Branch Social – Hitchin**

8pm. **Victoria**, Ickleford Road, then **Bricklayers Arms**, Queen Street, **BB's Bar**, Bridge Street and **Half Moon**, Queen Street.

**Fri 13: W&D Branch Social – Watford**

8.30pm. **Prince George**, 151 St Albans Road, WD24 5BB; 9.15pm **Nascot Arms**, 11 Stamford Street, Watford, WD17 4QS; 10pm **White Lion**, 79 St Albans Road, WD17 1SJ.

**Tue 24: W&D Committee Meeting - Oxhey**

8pm. **Oxhey Conservative Club**, Lower Paddock Road, Oxhey, Watford, WD19 4DS.

**MARCH****Fri 6: W&D Branch Social – Rickmansworth**

8.30pm. **Coach & Horses**, 22 High St, WD3 1ER; 9.15pm **Fox & Hounds**, 183 High Street, WD3 1AY; 10pm **Wishful Drinking**, 124 High Street, WD3 1AB.

**Wed 18: SH Branch Meeting – Hertford**

8pm, Old Barge, The Folly, Hertford.

**Tue 31: W&D Branch AGM – Watford**

8pm. **Two Trees Micro**, 18 Vicarage Rd, Watford, WD18 0EH.

**APRIL****Wed 22: SH Branch Meeting – London Colney**

8pm. **Bull**, Barnet Road, London Colney.

**Fri 24: NH Branch AGM – Baldock**

8pm **Orange Tree**, Norton Road, Baldock.

**Formal Notice****South Herts CAMRA Branch AGM – 24/01/2026**

The branch will hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the **Royston Social Club, 12 College Road, St Albans AL1 5ND** on **Saturday 24 January 2026** at approx. 3.30pm following a branch meeting which will **start at 2.00pm**. At the AGM our branch committee for 2026 will be elected by the members in attendance.

Please note the following arrangements for electing the Branch Committee as detailed in the Branch Constitution:

Nominations for membership of the Branch Committee shall be in writing or by email to the current Chair: Ian Boyd, 3 Nunnery Stables, St Albans AL1 2AS; chair@southherts.camra.org.uk

In each case, nominations must be signed by a proposer and seconder, both of whom should be members of the Branch, and accompanied by evidence of the nominee's willingness to stand. If a vote is required, a secret ballot will

take place at the AGM.

You will need your CAMRA membership card both to enter the club and vote.

A buffet will be provided and four cask ales plus a real cider are expected to be on offer.

Hopefully, you will be able to attend the AGM and seriously consider standing for membership of the Branch Committee and filling one of the many positions. Whilst our branch has a healthy membership of nearly 2,000, its success is dependent on enough enthusiastic people taking on the challenge of being *active* members.

We hope to have a guest speaker in the afternoon, with full details nearer the time - look out for my newsletters with that and other announcements!

**Ian Boyd**  
Chair, South Herts CAMRA

Pine branches with green needles and two Christmas ornaments (one red, one silver) are positioned at the top of the page.

**The  
St Albans  
Sopwell Sweep  
Ale Trail**

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December**

---

2.00pm	Beehive
2.45pm	White Hart Tap
3.30pm	Garibaldi
4.15pm	White Lion
5.00pm	Goat
5.45pm	Hare & Hounds

---

**Six Pubs – Over 20 Real Ales**

**Relax with a Pint and a Chat**

**For those with a spare Yuletide afternoon**

***Everyone Welcome!***

# Herts CAMRA Contacts

## South Herts CAMRA

🌐 southherts.camra.org.uk

**Chair:** Ian Boyd  
chair@southherts.camra.org.uk

**Branch contact:** Ben Wilkinson  
contact@southherts.camra.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/camrasouthherts  
📷 instagram.com/southhertscamra  
✂ x.com/SouthHertsCAMRA

## North Herts CAMRA

🌐 northherts.camra.org.uk

**Chair:** Dean Barrett  
chairman@northherts.camra.org.uk

**Branch contact:** Jeremy Kitson  
secretary@northherts.camra.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/CAMRANorthHerts  
📷 instagram.com/camranorthherts

## Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA

🌐 heb.camra.org.uk

**Chair:** Graham Darby  
chair@heb.camra.org.uk

**Branch contact:** Graham Darby  
secretary@heb.camra.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/  
hertsessexborderscamra

## Watford & District CAMRA

🌐 watford.camra.org.uk

**Chair:** Andrew Vaughan  
chair@watford.camra.org.uk

**Branch contact:** Andrew Vaughan  
branch@watford.camra.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/watfordcamra  
✂ x.com/watfordcamra

## White Hart Tap

4 Keyfield Terrace, St Albans AL1 1QJ  
01727 860974



**Open Every Day 12-11pm**

**3 regular beers**

*Timothy Taylor's Landlord,  
Tring Side Pocket for a Toad, Wadworth 6X*

**3 guest beers**

**Large range of Traditional Ciders**

**Freshly Cooked Food, Served Every Day**

**Traditional Sunday Roasts**  
(Inc. Vegetarian & Vegan Options)

**Large, Partially Covered & Heated  
Beer Garden**

[www.whiteharttap.co.uk](http://www.whiteharttap.co.uk)  
[whtpub@gmail.com](mailto:whtpub@gmail.com)



**South Herts CAMRA  
Pub of the Year 2024**

**ROBIN HOOD  
ST ALBANS**

**Real ales and ciders**

◆ Beer garden ◆

126 Victoria Street, St Albans AL1 3TG  
01727 856 459





# Steve's SHOUT

## Long-time problem **Short measures**

For me, watching TV is endless soaps, celebrity game shows and police chasing down criminals who then get let off. It makes me feel like throwing a brick through the screen! Between the dross and repeats we get advertising breaks, which are even more insulting.

The TV ad that angers me most is David Beckham trying to order a “wife beater”, sorry, Stella Artois. The barperson is pouring three beers for three ladies, and Beckham tries to take one, but fails when one of the ladies retrieves their order. The more observant will notice that, not only are all three glasses well short, but Beckham, with a knowing grin, then accepts an even shorter offering! This is all part of a subliminal campaign to try and get us, the consumer, to accept short measures without complaint. As I have said before, with a pint in many Hertfordshire pubs costing the wrong side of £5, it's never been more important to ask for a top up.

Even CAMRA publications are guilty of showing short measures. UK Trading

Standards generally accept that a pint at the point of sale should be a minimum of 95% fluid. City of London Trading Standards have done their best to help, though with an ever-increasing number of different glasses being used to ensure that other customers know what you are drinking, it can be hard to visually identify a 5% head.

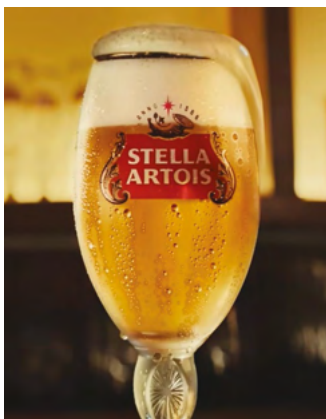
The CAMRA full-pint campaign, running since the early 1990s, argues that the only way to guarantee 20 fluid ounces is by serving a pint in oversize line-measure glasses, which have long been in use at all CAMRA beer festivals.

During my lengthy and extensive drinking career, I have had some absolutely bizarre reasons for being given short measures. On one occasion, when I asked for a top up I was told it would not be possible because the bar tilted. My reply was, fill up the glass and pass it to me – don't put it on the bar. Another time, at a different pub, the barmaid said she could not fill the glass any more as any froth flowing over the top would damage her brightly-coloured nail varnish.

In the summer 2025 edition of CAMRA's *Beer* magazine, publican Tim Maccabee stated that he had been a publican for just over two years. He wrote: “...*aside from restocking glassware, BEER (Winter 2024) states that the average drinker is “losing” £115 a year. The flip side is pubs would have to account for getting less out of each barrel. I know how hard CAMRA bemoans the loss of pubs, so I assume it'll welcome the small price rise to restore the financial status quo.*”

So let's look at these statements, individually.

A beer glass does not last very long, due to the salt and detergent used in glasswashers scoring the glasses, which makes them





look opaque, and to the inevitable breakages. Consequently, a 12 to 18 month window to replace the glass stock with lined glasses would mean nil additional cost.

Tim also raises the issue of a necessary price rise to cover the additional cost of providing a pint of fluid. Maybe, but the increase will be a one-off, after which customers will be guaranteed a full pint every time. In any case, the price of a pint is constantly rising, for all manner of reasons.

If full-pint legislation was introduced, with more beer needing to be brewed, there'd be more jobs at the brewery and in distribution. Secondly, what Tim may not have recognised, is the government would receive a windfall of extra tax – Excise Duty and VAT (let's face it, when you buy a pint you pay tax on your Tax).

So my message is this: let's make sure that CAMRA publications depict what we want and what we campaign for. Show lined glasses, and beer with an acceptable head. And remember, if you're short served, always ask for a top up.

**Steve Bury**  
Chair

Swale CAMRA

5% short  
10% short  
15% short  
20% short

↑↑↑  
**Hold to top of glass**

It's OK to ask for a top-up.  
Find out more about short measure beer and how to complain if your pint is too small:  
[cityoflondon.gov.uk/shortmeasure](http://cityoflondon.gov.uk/shortmeasure)



# Roger... and out

## Ale City

### St Albans' Beer History and Remarkable Pubs

St Albans is a fascinating city, rich in history... and pubs. It's well-known for having more pubs per square mile than any other town or city in the country, but less is known of the age and heritage of many of those ancient inns and taverns.

Writing *Ale City* has been a labour of love. I have lived and drunk here for 50 years and supped in most of the pubs over that long period. The large number of outlets is due, in part, to the fact that St Albans has for centuries stood on major coaching and then train routes. The Romans built Watling Street, linking the city with London and the Midlands. This was followed, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, by the Great North Road, which brought coaches clattering into the city with passengers eager to refresh themselves. They found no shortage of inns and ale houses.

At one time, from Holywell Hill to the Market Place, there were no fewer than 14 inns offering food, drink and beds. The wide arches between the shops on Holywell Hill mark the former entrances to many of those



inns. And the inns, of course, needed ale. Many publicans brewed on the premises, but others bought beer from local brewers. There was a brewery on St Peter's Street as early as 1272, and by 1353 there were no fewer than 81 brewers in the city. These would have been small operations, with the brewers almost certainly having other trades, such as baking.

But brewing had existed even earlier. The monks in the abbey brewed prodigious amounts of ale for their own consumption, for "pilgrim houses" – inns built by the abbot for people on pilgrimage – and for two nunneries in the area. The ruins of one nunnery can still be seen while the Pré Hotel, which started life as a hostel for women suffering from leprosy, developed into a nunnery.

What I have discovered is that, before the monks, the Romans in Verulamium almost certainly brewed beer. For centuries it was assumed that the Romans drank only wine, but recent research shows that while Roman

## Four from fifty!



Blacksmiths Arms (St Peter's Street)



Boot (Market Place)

top brass certainly enjoyed wine imported from Italy, the lower orders, busily building towns and roads, needed the greater refreshment offered by beer.

The Romans obtained beer from brewers, but the discovery of malt kilns during excavations in Roman sites in St Albans and surrounding Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire indicates that the invaders knew how to transform barley and other grains into malt for brewing. Local brewer Kevin Yelland brewed special beers for my book, developing recipes he believes were once used by both Romans and monks.

The major part of the book is devoted to the existing pubs and inns in the city. By far the best-known pub is Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, listed for several years in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the oldest pub in the country.

It has been my sad duty to report that is incorrect and it's not even the oldest pub in St Albans. Recent research suggests it was built in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and developed from a pigeon house in the grounds of the abbey that was moved to its present location when the abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII.

Older inns include the White Hart and the Fleur de Lys – the latter shamefully turned

into a 'cocktail bar' by the owners of the Snug chain. Some people have no respect for history or heritage. The magnificent Boot dates from around 1422. Low beams show how much shorter our forebears were, and it's astonishing to think that soldiers fighting in the First Wars of the Roses once drank there. Among the many other splendid pubs of today are the Cock and the Blacksmiths on opposite corners of Hatfield Road where rock groups were formed in the 1960s.

I have cast my net wide, taking in the three excellent and distinctively different pubs in Sandridge village and the nearby John Bunyan, with the ruins of Bunyan's cottage only yards from the pub.

Even though I have been a resident for many years, writing the book has been a voyage of discovery. But without the wonderful photos I could not have done justice

to the city's pubs, and for that I am very grateful to photographer and fellow CAMRA Member, Will Lewis.

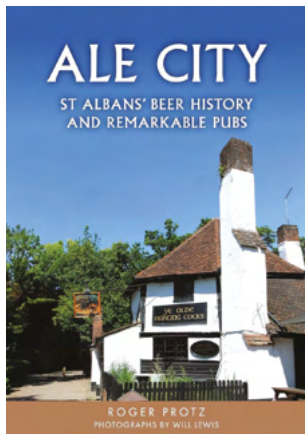
I do hope you will join us for a pint!

**Roger Protz**

*British Guild of Beer Writers*

<https://protzonbeer.co.uk>

*South Herts CAMRA*



RRP: £15.99

<https://www.amberley-books.com/ale-city.html>, <https://shop1.camra.org.uk/product/ale-city/> (discount for CAMRA members), Amazon Prime, St Albans Cathedral & Museum bookshops



Cock (St Peter's Street)



White Hart Hotel (Holywell Hill)

# Advertising & Contributors

3mm bleed

<b>FULL PAGE AD</b>		
210mm high x 148mm wide (plus 3mm bleed on all sides)		
	1-3 issues	4 issues
<b>Full Page</b>	£290	£232
<b>Inside Cover</b>	£342	£285
<b>Back Cover</b>	£435	£435

3mm bleed

3mm bleed

**Bleed** - this is a margin that allows printer to trim page to correct size.

**File Type** - PDF 300dpi preferred. TIFF/PNG/JPEG may be acceptable.

<b>QUARTER PAGE AD</b>	
92mm high x 65mm wide	
1-3 issues	4 issues
£90	£72

<b>HALF PAGE AD</b>	
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1-3 issues	4 issues
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## Thanks to this issue's contributors...



Andrew Vaughan	Paul Clinton
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## ... and advertisers, without whom this magazine would not exist!

32 Boot	47 Orange Tree
2 Cask & Stillage	13 Paper Inn
52 Cross Keys	51 Plough
33 Dylans at the Kings Arms	19 Podge's Belgian Beer Tours
6 Great Northern	14 Pubs in Town
64 Harvey's Brewery	63 Queen's Head
49 Hertford Club	57 Robin Hood
49 Lordship Arms	30 Royston Club
35 Mermaid	21 Six Bells
40 New River Brewery	42 Timothy Taylor's
26 Old Cross Tavern	41 Tring Brewery
	57 White Hart Tap

# QUEENS HEAD

Award Winning Free House

**Herts & Essex Borders CAMRA  
Pub of the Year 2024 - 2025  
Cider Pub of the Year 2022 - 2025**

**Hertfordshire County CAMRA  
Cider Pub of the Year 2023 - 2024**

**East Anglia Region CAMRA  
Cider Pub of the Year 2022**

**UK National CAMRA  
Cider Pub of the Year 2022  
(Top 4 finalist)**



Bar - Mon-Fri: 5-11pm | Sat: 12-11pm | Sun: 12-10.30pm  
Meals - Wed-Fri: Flexible | Sat: 12-11pm | Sun: 12-10.30pm

**Allens Green, Sawbridgeworth, Herts. CM21 0LS**  
**01279 723393 email [info@qhpub.co.uk](mailto:info@qhpub.co.uk)**

# A GOLDEN YEAR FOR HARVEY'S

We are delighted to report that three of our draught Sussex beers have taken First Prize in **CAMRA's London and South East Area 2025 Champion Beer of Britain Competitions**

## Sussex XX Mild Ale Gold Award

Milds Category  
'Born to be Mild' Festival,  
Wandsworth

## Sussex Best Bitter Gold Award

Session Bitters Category  
Farnham Beer Festival

## Sussex XXXX Old Ale Gold Award

Brown Ales and Red Ales, Old  
Ales and Strong Milds Category  
Ealing Beer Festival



We also competed in national and international competitions with our packaged products.

Our entries in the **British Bottlers' Institute Competition 2025** saw us take Gold Awards for Christmas Ale, Lewes Castle Brown Ale, Southdown Harvest Ale and Star of Eastbourne East India Ale.

At the **World Beer Awards 2025**, we achieved Gold UK Winner Awards for Christmas Ale, Old Ale and Prince of Denmark Stout.

While, at the **International Beer Challenge 2025**, we were given Gold Awards for Georgian Dragon Ruby Ale, Old Ale and Prince of Denmark Stout. Gold Medallists then go head to head in each category and these heats saw successes for

**Old Ale (Trophy for Best Ale up to 5%)**  
**Prince of Denmark (Best Stout or Porter Trophy)**

The seven trophy finalists then compete in the final.

The judges named  
**Harvey's Old Ale 'Supreme Champion'**

We were also awarded the accolade  
**UK Brewer of the Year 2025**

*"Winning the 'Supreme Champion' Trophy, in competition with a wealth of beer styles and brewing nations, is an accolade we had not expected. Our Sussex beers are brewed in the County Town using authentic methods of production that have stood the test of time. Combining our spring water and yeast strain with locally sourced hops and barley remains fundamental to our brewing process, as does the skill and dedication of our staff. Every member of the team has contributed to this success and I am immensely proud of them."*

Miles Jenner, Head Brewer & Joint Managing Director



**HARVEY'S**  
BREWERY

